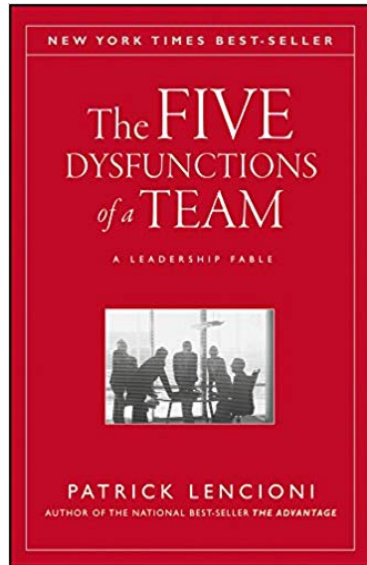# #1 Book Summary: The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, by Patrick M. Lencioni

by Allen Cheng

https://www.allencheng.com/the-five-dysfunctions-of-a-team-summary-patrick-lencioni/

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable explores how teams fail to work cohesively together through a dynamic, five-part model of dysfunction. The five dysfunctions are 1) absence of trust, 2) fear of conflict, 3) lack of commitment, 4) avoidance of accountability, and 5) inattention to results. Through identifying these root causes of poor teamwork, teams can develop specific strategies for overcoming each of them. By doing this, they will become comfortable with one another, be willing to engage in constructive debate, achieve clarity and buy-in around team priorities, hold one another to high standards, and focus on team results instead of individual ambition.

1-Page Summary of The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

What prevents a team from succeeding in its mission? This is the central question of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team.* The book presents the five dysfunctions like a pyramid - each one builds on the

next. And to solve all the dysfunctions, you need to start at the bottom and most fundamental dysfunction.

Here's an overview of the five dysfunction. Each one discusses what a healthy environment looks like, what the dysfunction looks like, and how to overcome the dysfunction.

Absence of Trust

Trust is confidence that your peers have good intentions and aren't out to harm you. **Teams that trust one another are comfortable being vulnerable**, and can admit mistakes and weaknesses.

If you have an absence of trust, then you don't feel safe being vulnerable and admitting your weaknesses, because you fear your vulnerability will be used against you. As a result, teams that lack trust hesitate to ask for help, spend a lot of time managing behaviors and appearances, and hide their mistakes from one another. People who are afraid of being vulnerable receive feedback poorly, and they retaliate. As a result, productive feedback is stifled.

To overcome this dysfunction, teams should practice exchanging feedback in structured environments. In these safe environments, they can identify strengths and weaknesses without repercussions. Examples include personality profiles (like Myers-Briggs type), identifying each other's single biggest contribution and area for improvement, and 360-degree feedback.

Fear of Conflict

Functional teams engage in ideological conflict. Because they trust each other, they feel comfortable expressing their true opinions and publicly disagreeing over important issues. With trust, they know that feedback isn't meant to damage a person, but rather to improve them.

When there is a fear of conflict, these conversations get swept under the rug and the team is unable to resolve critical issues. Teams that fear conflict don't tap into the full expertise and experience of their members and end up channeling their unspoken conflicts into personal attacks.

To overcome this dysfunction, teams should actively seek out sources of conflict instead of avoiding them. Leaders should give real-time permission for individuals to debate with one another, and hold back their urge to protect the team from conflict and disagreement.

Lack of Commitment

Committed teams are those that have full buy-in from everyone. Because they've been able to passionately and productively debate ideas, they can move ahead with a decision knowing that everyone's opinions have been considered.

When there is a lack of commitment, teammates are unclear about priorities and expectations.

Teams that suffer from a lack of commitment lose opportunities due to delays, distractions, missed deadlines, and repeated discussions of the same issues.

To overcome this dysfunction, teams should review major decisions and responsibilities at the end of each meeting and assign deadlines to individual team members.

Avoidance of Accountability

High-performing teams hold each other accountable to high performance standards. They are able to do this because everyone is clear on what is expected of themselves and their teammates (they have already engaged in healthy conflict to develop a plan that everyone is committed to). Moreover, they're comfortable being vulnerable and sharing feedback, so they can raise questions of performance in other people without fear of retaliation.

When there is a lack of accountability, teams encourage low standards and force the leader to become the sole source of discipline. Higher-performing team members resent lower performers. Mediocrity becomes the standard.

To overcome this dysfunction, teams should engage in peer pressure tactics, which is scalable and reduces the bureaucracy needed for oversight. This means publishing team goals and standards and instituting regular process reviews. They can also receive team rewards, which motivates teams to work together and point out individuals who aren't pulling their weight.

Inattention to Results

Great teams are focused on _team _results, not individual milestones. This is possible because individuals know that they will be called out by their peers if their poor performance ends up hurting the team.

If a team isn't focused on team results, its members will gravitate toward working on what's good for them personally or for their department, to the detriment of the organization as a whole. This connects to the previous dysfunction - when accountability is absent, a team member will naturally pursue whatever is best for herself.

To overcome this dysfunction, organizations and leaders should encourage rewards based on the achievement of team outcomes. They should publicly declare ambitious goals, which will inspire the team to meet them. Both tactics provide the incentive for individuals to work as a team toward common goals, rather than pursuing individual ambitions.

Full Summary of The Five Dysfunctions of a Team
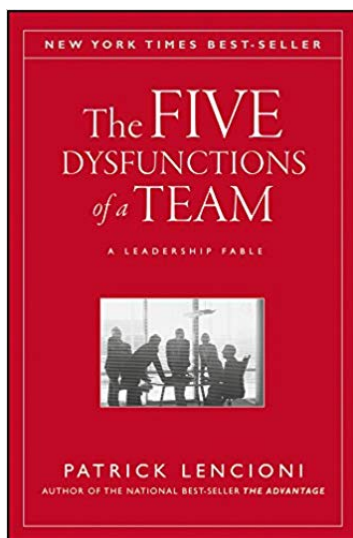
An Executive Team Divided

_Five Dysfunctions of a Team _explores the dysfunctions that prevent teams from working cohesively as a unit and outlines some key strategies that teams can employ to identify and resolve them. The book does this through a parable about a troubled (fictional) company called DecisionTech, whose executive team exhibits all five of the dysfunctions.

Missed Opportunities

DecisionTech seems to have everything going for it. They have a seasoned executive team, a solid business plan, plenty of startup capital from investors, and leading-edge technology.

Unfortunately, they find themselves un...

---End of Preview---

Read the rest of the "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" summary at my new book summary product, [Shortform](#).

Here's what you'll find in the **full The Five Dysfunctions of a Team summary:**

- An Executive Team Divided
- Exercise: Testing Teamwork
- Dysfunction One: Absence of Trust

- Dysfunction Two: Fear of Conflict
- Exercise: Digging Into Discomfort
- Dysfunction Three: Lack of Commitment
- Dysfunction Four: Avoidance of Accountability
- Dysfunction Five: Inattention to Results
- Exercise: Defining Disarray
- Solving Dysfunction One: Building Trust
- Solving Dysfunction Two: Empowering Constructive Conflict
- Exercise: Getting Comfortable with Conflict
- Solving Dysfunction Three: Fostering Commitment
- Solving Dysfunction Four: Promoting Accountability
- Solving Dysfunction Five: Delivering Results
- Exercise: Achieving Alignment
- Epilogue: Realizing Results

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