

THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM

**Inattention
to results**

**Avoidance of
Accountability**

Lack of Commitment

Fear of Conflict

Absence of Trust

GREAT TEAMS

1. They trust each other
2. They engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas
3. They commit to decisions and plans of actions
4. They hold one another accountable for delivering against those plans
5. They focus on the achievement of collective results

Dysfunction #1: Absence of Trust

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

- It requires team members to make themselves to one another, and to be confident that their respective vulnerabilities will not be used against them
- It is only when team members are truly comfortable being exposed to one another that they begin to act without concern for protecting themselves
- Most competitive people learn to be competitive with their peers, and protective of their reputations
- Teams that lack trust waste inordinate amounts of time and energy managing their behaviors and interactions within the group

How to overcome the Absence of Trust?

- *Shared experiences over time
- *Multiple instances of follow-through and credibility
- *An in-depth understanding of the unique attributes of team members

Exercises to overcome the Absence of Trust

Personal Histories Exercise: Have members of your team go around a table and have them answer a short series of simple questions about themselves

-Family, siblings, hometown, hobbies, first jobs . . .

Team Effectiveness Exercise: Identify the single most important contribution that each of their peers makes to the teams, as well as one area that they must either improve upon or eliminate for the good of the team

Personality and Behavioral Preference Profiles: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or any other type of personality test

Role of the Leader

*Must demonstrate vulnerability first

*Create an environment that does not punish vulnerability

*Vulnerability must be genuine and not staged

What establishing trust leads to

*A team will be able to make conflict possible because team members do not hesitate to engage in passionate and sometime emotional debate, knowing that they will not be punished for saying something that might otherwise be interpreted as destructive or critical

<u>Team members with absence of trust . . .</u>	<u>Members of trusting teams . . .</u>
Conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from one another	Admit weaknesses and mistakes
Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback	Ask for help
Hesitate to offer help outside their own areas of responsibility	Accept questions and input about their area of responsibility
Jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of others without attempting to clarify them	Give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a negative conclusion
Fail to recognize and tap into one another's skills and experiences	Take risks in offering feedback and assistance
Waste time and energy managing their behaviors for effect	Focus time and energy on important issues, not politics
Hold grudges	Offer and accept apologies w/out hesitation
Dread meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time together	Look forward to meetings and other opportunities to work as a group

Dysfunction #2: Fear of Conflict

Sometimes, the higher you go up the management chain, the more you find people spending inordinate amounts of time and energy trying to avoid the kind of passionate debates that are essential to any great team

- Teams that avoid ideological conflict often do so in order to avoid hurting team members feelings, and then end up encouraging dangerous tension
- Many people that avoid conflict do so in the name of efficiency, but in actuality, healthy conflict is actually a time saver; those that avoid conflict actually doom themselves to revisiting issues again and again without resolution

Those that embrace conflict discuss and resolve issues more quickly and completely than others, and they emerge from heated debates with no residual feelings or collateral damage, but with an eagerness and readiness to take on the next important issue

How to overcome the Fear of Conflict?

- *Acknowledge that conflict is productive, so don't avoid it; actually encourage it

Exercises to overcome the Fear of Conflict

Mining: Find someone within your group who extracts buried disagreements within the team and sheds the light of day on them.

- It has to be someone who has the courage and confidence to call out sensitive issues and force team members to work through them.

Real Time Permission: Team members need to coach one another not to shy away from healthy debate, so when things get heated and people start to retreat from conflict, remind them why this is important and necessary.

- When the discussion is over, remind participants that the conflict they just engaged in is good for the team and not something to avoid in the future

Role of the Leader

- *Restrain desire to not allow conflict to resolve itself; let your team sort it out
- *Model appropriate conflict behavior

What establishing productive conflict leads to

- *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

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

Dysfunction #3: Lack of Commitment

Great teams make clear and timely decisions and move forward with complete buy-in from every member of the team, even those who voted against the decision.

- Lack of commitment can be hampered by a need for consensus. Teams need to understand that reasonable human beings do not need to get their way in order to support a decision, but only need to know that their opinions have been heard and considered
- Lack of commitment can also be hampered by a need for certainty. Teams need to understand that *a* decision is better than *no* decision. It is important to realize that it is better to make a decision boldly and be wrong than to waffle

Only when everyone has put their opinions and perspectives on the table can the team confidently commit to a decision knowing that it has tapped into the collective wisdom of the entire group.

- If an executive team does not commit to clear decisions, it can create unresolvable discord that can run deep into an organization. More than any of the dysfunctions, this one creates dangerous ripple effects for subordinates.

How to overcome Lack of Commitment?

*Decisions must clear, concise and timely

Exercises to overcome Lack of Commitment

Cascading Messaging: At the end of a meeting, 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, then clearly specify outcomes before putting them into action

- By leaving meetings clearly aligned with one another, leaders send a powerful and welcomed message to employees who have grown accustomed to receiving inconsistent and even contradictory statements from managers who attend the same meeting

Deadlines: Use clear deadlines for when decisions will be made. The worst enemy of a team that is susceptible to this dysfunction is ambiguity, and timing is one of the more critical factors that must be made clear.

Contingency and Worst-Case Scenario Analysis: Clarifying the worst-case scenario for a decision is important for a decision to be made. This actually allows people to reduce their fears by helping them realize that the costs of an incorrect decision is survivable, and far less damaging than they had imagined.

Low-Risk Exposure Therapy: When a team forces itself 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

Role of the Leader

- *Be comfortable with the prospect of making a decision that may turn out to be wrong
- *Push the group for closure around issues by sticking to the agreed-upon schedule

What establishing timely commitment leads to

- *In order to call each other on their behaviors and actions, they must have a clear sense of what is expected

<u>Teams that fails to commit. . .</u>	<u>Teams that commit . . .</u>
Creates ambiguity among the team about direction and priorities	Creates clarity around direction and priorities
Watches windows of opportunity close due to excessive analysis and unnecessary delay	Aligns the entire team around common objectives
Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure	Develops an ability to learn from mistakes
Revisits discussions and decisions again and again	Take advantage of opportunities before competitors do
Encourages second-guessing among team members	Move forward without hesitation
	Changes direction without hesitation or guilt

Dysfunction #4: Avoidance of Accountability

This refers to the willingness of team members to call their peers on performance or behaviors that might hurt the team

In this dysfunction, it is the unwillingness of team members to tolerate the interpersonal discomfort that accompanies calling a peer on his or her behavior and the more general tendency to avoid difficult conversations

-Members of great teams improve their relationships by holding one another accountable, thus demonstrating that they respect each other and have high expectations for one another's performance

The most effective and efficient means of maintaining high standards of performance on a team is peer pressure; there is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their performance

How to overcome Avoidance of Accountability?

*Team members must have the confidence to tactfully confront their teammates that are not doing their job

Exercises to overcome Avoidance of Accountability

Publication of Goals and Standards: Clearly clarify publicly exactly what the teams need to achieve, who needs to deliver what, and how everyone must behave in order to succeed

Simple and Regular Progress Reviews: Team members should regularly communicate with one another, either verbally or in written form, about how they feel their teammates are doing against stated objectives and standards

Team Rewards: By shifting rewards away from individual performance to team achievement, the team can create a culture of accountability

Role of the Leader

*It must be clear to all team members that 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 necessary

What establishing accountability leads to

*If teammates are not 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

<u>Teams that avoid accountability. . .</u>	<u>Teams that are accountable . . .</u>
Creates resentment among team members who have different standards of performance	Ensures that poor performers feel pressure to improve
Encourages mediocrity	Identifies potential problems quickly by questioning one another's approaches without hesitation
Misses deadlines and key deliverables	Establishes respect among team members who are held to the same high standard
Places an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline	Avoids excessive bureaucracy around performance management and corrective action

Dysfunction #5: Inattention to Results

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

- For some members of the team, merely being part of the team is enough to keep them satisfied.
- There are some teams or organizations, like altruistic non-profits, that believe that the nobility of their mission is enough to justify their satisfaction
- Some focus on individual status, or enhancing their own positions or career prospects at the expense of the team.
- A functional team must make the collective results of the group to be more important to each individual than individual team members' goals

How to overcome Inattention to Results?

*By making results clear, and rewarding only those behaviors and actions that contribute to those results

Exercises to overcome Inattention to Results

Publication Declaration of Results: Teams that are more willing to commit publicly to specific results are more likely to work with a passionate, even desperate desire to achieve those results

Results-Based Rewards: Members focus their attention on results in order to tie their rewards, especially compensation, to the achievement of specific outcomes. Still, letting someone take home a bonus merely for "trying hard", even in the absence of results, sends a message that achieving the outcome may not be terribly important at all.

Role of the Leader

- *Set the tone to focus on results
- *Must be selfless and objective
- *Reserve rewards and recognition for those who make real contributions to the achievement of group goals

<u>Teams not focused on results...</u>	<u>Teams focused on results ...</u>
Stagnates and fails to grow	Retains achievement-oriented employees
Rarely defeats competitors	Minimizes individualistic behavior
Loses achievement-oriented employees	Enjoys success and suffers failure acutely
Encourages team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals	Benefits from individuals who subjugate their own goals/interests for the good of the team
Is easily distracted	Avoids distractions