

MASTERING MANAGEMENT

with **Mark Taylor**



Is Your Team Dysfunctional?

Do you look forward to team meetings? How vulnerable are the members of your team? Are they open with one another about their weaknesses and mistakes? Do your teammates genuinely and quickly apologize when they say or do something inappropriate or possibly damaging to the group? Or is all you hear stories, excuses and explanations? How functional is your management team?

The *New York Times* best-selling book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, by Patrick Lencioni, claims that it is not capital or the amount of cash, strategy or technology that gives a company the competitive advantage; the key success factor is a highly effective team.

The number one dysfunction that underlies all the rest is an absence of trust. “Trust is the most critical trait of a great team,” according to Lencioni. “Great teams don’t hold back. They air their dirty laundry. They admit their mistakes and weaknesses and don’t fear reprisals.”

According to philosophers Fernando Flores and Robert Solomon, “The problem of trust has clearly emerged as the problem in human relationships and organizations. What makes most companies falter — leaving aside market forces, bad products and incompetent management — is the lack of trust.”

So, what is trust? What does it mean in the context of a work team? Lencioni answers this in the following way: “Trust means team members know their teammates won’t use their vulnerabilities against them.” Those vulnerabilities include skill deficiencies, interpersonal weaknesses, mistakes and requests for help.

We all want to look good and have our peers and boss think we are competent. The problem comes when we spend so much time guarding ourselves and protecting our identity. When we are with a group where we trust one another and can be ourselves without looking over our shoulders every second, we can be free to focus our energy and attention to the issues and opportunities we are facing. Trust is being free from worry. “The freedom provided by trust is the freedom to think for oneself and speak up with one’s ideas.” (Flores & Solomon)

How do we create trust on a team, or in a workplace? It takes time and intention to create and maintain trust. Lencioni’s book offers several suggestions for overcoming an absence of trust that can accelerate the process. One suggestion is to

HOW DOES YOUR TEAM RATE?

RATE YOUR TEAM ON A 1-10 SCALE.

SCORE

Team members conceal their mistakes and weaknesses.	
Teammates seldom ask for help or offer to help others.	
Members dread team meetings.	
Morale on the team is low.	
Members are suspicious of one another.	
Peers compete with each other.	
The team wastes time and energy managing behaviors and interactions.	
Members fail to tap into each other’s skills and experience.	
Politics takes precedence over issues and results.	
Members genuinely apologize to one another when they do or say something inappropriate.	

have members take a personality or behavior profile and publicly share the results. There are several available, including the Meyers-Briggs personality test, which is based on the work of Carl Jung, the enneagram and the DISC assessment. (You can Google any of these to find more information.) The benefit of these tools is that every member can see each other’s strengths and weaknesses in a format that is non-judgmental. It becomes easier to become vulnerable when everyone on the team admits that they have their own unique weaknesses.

In summary, if your team is dysfunctional, take the action to change the dynamic. “Trust is the essential precondition upon which all real success depends.” (Flores & Solomon) ■

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