Combat the 5 Dysfunctions of a Team

(Patrick Lencioni)

Notes adapted from the book *Overcoming the 5 dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni

1. **Absence of Trust:** The fear of being vulnerable prevents team members from building trust with each other.
2. **Fear of Conflict:** The desire to preserve artificial harmony stifles productive ideological conflict within the team.
3. **Lack of Commitment:** The lack of clarity and/or buy-in prevents team members from making decisions they stick to.
4. **Avoidance of Accountability:** The need to avoid interpersonal discomfort prevents team members from holding each other accountable for their behaviours and performance.
5. **Inattention to Results:** The pursuit of individual goals and personal status erodes the team's focus on collective success.

Ref: Patrick Lencioni, The Table Group

<https://www.tablegroup.com/topics-and-resources/teamwork-5-dysfunctions/#5dmodel>

**Trust** is the foundation of great teamwork. Great team members trust each other and can be open to recognise each other’s strengths and accomplishments and their own weaknesses, mistakes, fears and behaviours. Recognise what behaviours and attitudes build trust and which destroy or chip away at trust. Trust is all about vulnerability which most people find difficult. That’s why you need to really get to know each other as people, not just at a superficial level as work colleagues. Trust is never complete – it needs nourishing and maintenance over time.

*Personality profiles* – relate to working styles and how to work with each other.

**Healthy conflict** – it is not personal, or about you. Differences in perspective and ways of working are just that you all see the world differently. Focus on the ideas – it is ok to debate ideas and perspectives and don’t attack the person. Embrace the diversity of different perspectives, experience, knowledge, backgrounds, cultures, religions, genders etc. because it helps you build a more complete picture of the full situation, and overcome unconscious biases that unknowingly limit perception. This is critical for making good sound decisions and raises your performance as a team.

*Perspectives* –recognise the impact of mindset, assumptions, expectations, beliefs etc. that lead to biased /incomplete information and lead to differences of opinion. Recognise this is NOT a threat – awareness of how brain might consider it a potential threat and make you feel uncomfortable. It is not about winning or losing an argument, it is about building up a more complete perspective. Not right or wrong, but This AND That.

*Embrace difference in opinions and conflicting ideas* – Be curious to listen to other perspectives in order to understand. Ask open questions. Get a much fuller picture when you listen to all perspectives. Step into their shoes – view it through their eyes. Ensure everyone’s perspective is aired and that each team member feels heard and understood.

*Conflict diagnostic* - e.g.: Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Recognise the default style of each team member and understand how you can work better together to stop avoiding conflict by embracing openness to listening to different opinions, step into collaborative styles, and reach constructive resolution of destructive conflict when it occurs.

Then **commit** to agree and follow a common way forward that is good for the overall team and collective outcomes. Discuss how each person will contribute – clarity on who does what, where, when. How may be up to the individual… align with their way of working.

*Get Buy-in to the decision* – Commitment is NOT consensus. You may disagree with the on a decision. Make sure that all opinions/perspectives have been heard, understood, considered and explained in the context of the situation, then assess in relation to the collective outcome required. It is not about winning or losing for your idea but finding the most effective way to achieve the collective outcome that draws on bits from all the ideas and perspectives put forwards.

Set aside your individual needs and agendas and put the team requirements first. See the overall team success to deliver collective results/outcomes as your success.

*Get clarity and alignment about the decision* – uncover any assumptions. E.g. Ask “What have we decided today?” – capture on flipchart – and it is ok for you to say “that’s not what I thought we agreed to” – open discussion on what are the hidden assumptions, until everyone is clear on what the decision means. Be extremely explicit about what has been agreed on and identify discrepancies. The same words mean different things to different people – comes back to mindset, filters, perceptions, assumptions, beliefs etc. It leads to a false impression that you are on the same page if you don’t actually check for clarity.

Commit to decisions and **agree to hold each other accountable** to decisions and standards. Not just for the leader to do this, peers hold each other accountable too – for joint actions, contribution to results and for behaviours and agreed ways you want to work with each other.

It is easier when you have a top priority, purpose and feel a collective responsibility for it – hence the purpose for the team in the charter.

**Focus on collective results**. Decide on priority outcomes your team needs to deliver, and keep them in mind – reminder at start of team meetings of purpose and priority outcomes you are working towards – and the priority step result/outcome that is the topic for that meeting!

Focusing on collective results is difficult – you are often measured on your personal performance, individual outputs, etc. rather than team performance itself.

*What is your first priority*? The team you manage or the team you are a member of? Many people spend more time with the team they manage and may feel more responsibility / loyalty to ensure resources for their success. In reality, team members generally want their manager / leader to be strong team members on the team above, with healthy strong relationships at that level, because that makes it easier for them to work without having to navigate organisational politics. What do you need to prioritise loyalty/commitment to this team that you are a member of? To find fulfilment in being the team member as much as you find fulfilment in being the team leader?

**Books.** Available at Amazon and Patrick Lencioni’s website <https://www.tablegroup.com/books>

*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni

*Overcoming The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Field Guide* by Patrick Lencioni

# The Team Charter

Effective teams are driven by an inspiring Team Charter that must support the organisation’s vision. The charter statement is a written document stating the team’s intended direction.

A clearly articulated team charter provides the foundation for developing shared goals and action plans that will support the team to achieve its desired outcomes. It includes three key elements:

* What does the team do?
* For whom does the team perform its functions?
* How does the team go about doing its job?