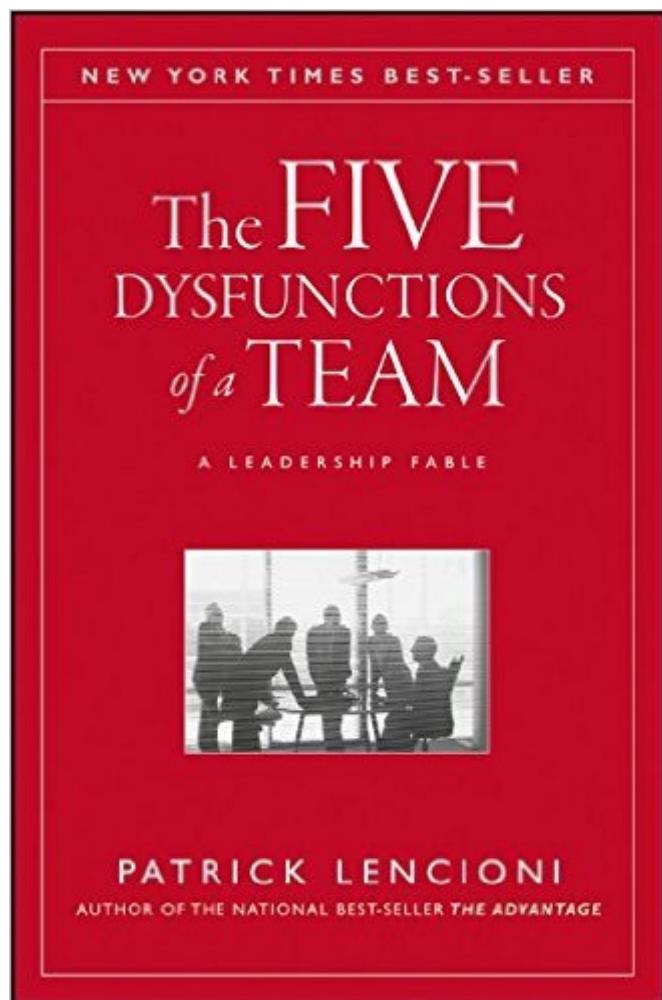


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# The Five Dysfunctions Of A Team: A Leadership Fable



## **Synopsis**

In The Five Dysfunctions of a Team Patrick Lencioni once again offers a leadership fable that is as enthralling and instructive as his first two best-selling books, The Five Temptations of a CEO and The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive. This time, he turns his keen intellect and storytelling power to the fascinating, complex world of teams. Kathryn Petersen, Decision Tech's CEO, faces the ultimate leadership crisis: Uniting a team in such disarray that it threatens to bring down the entire company. Will she succeed? Will she be fired? Will the company fail? Lencioni's utterly gripping tale serves as a timeless reminder that leadership requires as much courage as it does insight. Throughout the story, Lencioni reveals the five dysfunctions which go to the very heart of why teams even the best ones-often struggle. He outlines a powerful model and actionable steps that can be used to overcome these common hurdles and build a cohesive, effective team. Just as with his other books, Lencioni has written a compelling fable with a powerful yet deceptively simple message for all those who strive to be exceptional team leaders.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

By dedicating 90% of his book to a so-called leadership fable, Patrick Lencioni very effectively conveys the very essence of the model he proposes in order to deal with dysfunctional teams. Though the story he presents is that of a hypothetical newly appointed CEO of a distressed start-up and (in the beginning of the story) her highly dysfunctional executive team, the model is perfectly

applicable to any team throughout most organizations. The model consists of a pyramid with the five dysfunctions of a team (from the bottom, up): 1) Absence of trust: stemming from an unwillingness in the team members to be vulnerable and genuinely open up with one another about their mistakes and weaknesses. 2) Fear of conflict: inability to engage in unfiltered, passionate (yet constructive, though it may strike you as odd) debate. 3) Lack of commitment: no buy in and commitment can be expected when ideas and opinions have not been aired and genuinely taken into consideration prior to a decision. 4) Avoidance of accountability: without commitment to a clearly defined set of goals, team members will hesitate to call their colleagues on their actions and behaviors that are counterproductive for the team. 5) Inattention to results: Lencioni brings it all home through the realization that avoidance of accountability leads to a state where team members tend to put their individual needs above the team's collective goals. Throughout the last leg of his book, Lencioni contrasts how dysfunctional teams behave by comparing them to a cohesive team in the case of each of the five dysfunctions. He also provides suggestions on overcoming each of the dysfunctions and insights into the role of the leader in this process, all in a very structured and to-the-point way.

I found this book to be Patrick's best - An easy read with a great structure for keeping your team healthy. Strongly recommended if your team has more than its fair share of politics. If you have this, start at the first dysfunction and work your way up! Summary - A start up has just hired a new CEO, an older woman with operational experience in bricks-and-mortar companies where she had to deal with a dysfunctional team, including one especially venomous worker. The framework of the 5 Dysfunctions:<sup>\*</sup> The first dysfunction is an Absence of Trust. This happens when team members are not open with one another about their mistakes and weaknesses.<sup>\*</sup> This sets the tone for the second dysfunction - The Fear of Conflict. Teams that lack trust are unable to engage in unfiltered and passionate debate of ideas. Instead they resort to veiled discussions and guarded comments.<sup>\*</sup> The lack of healthy conflict is a problem because leads to the third dysfunction - 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.<sup>\*</sup> Because of this lack of commitment, team members develop the fourth dysfunction - Avoidance of Accountability. 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.<sup>\*</sup> Failure to hold one another accountable create an environment that leads to the fifth dysfunction - Inattention to Results, which can thrive where individuals put their needs (ego, career development, or recognition) above that of the team.

This is a very short read. It took me about 3 hours to read the book over-to-cover, and I did not feel as if I skimmed over any major concepts. The book is written as a novel, in which a new highly effective CEO is placed in charge of an extremely dysfunctional silicon valley startup company. The CEO takes the executive team to a leadership retreat where she teaches them about teamwork and the five major dysfunctions of a team. The five major dysfunctions as stated by the book are: 1) Absence of Trust 2) Fear of Conflict 3) Lack of Commitment 4) Avoidance of Accountability 5) Inattention to results. At first the team is very skeptical of the CEO, and generally feels that the entire retreats are a waste of time. Gradually the CEO wins over each member of the team, and over the course of the 'novel' (warning: spoiler), fires a team member and re-organizes the executive team to better match the needs of the organization. Ok, now for my criticisms of the book... My first criticism - this reads like a cheezy TBS movie, where a new woman CEO wins over her team with compassion and competence. I have nothing against the general message of the author's novel, but in real life, people simply don't open up as personally as they do in this novel. The entire 'case study' feels canned and artificial. For example, when Kathryn, the new CEO takes over the company, the former CEO, Jeff, goes to a VP of Biz Development role. By the end of the book, he's so committed to the teamwork mentality that he voluntarily demotes himself, so that he is no longer an executive level staff member, and he reports to the COO as director of Biz Development....

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