

Five dysfunctions of a team

This book walks through a case study of a dysfunctional team and the leader who worked to set things right.

A summary of the five dysfunctions of a team can be seen in the pyramid below.

Whilst the book has lots of tips on how you can improve a dysfunctional team, the summary is also in the below diagram.



GenAI Summary of this book

"The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" by Patrick Lencioni presents a leadership fable that identifies the core obstacles preventing teams from achieving their potential. The book follows a fictional CEO who diagnoses and addresses five interconnected dysfunctions that plague her executive team: absence of trust (team members are unwilling to be vulnerable with one another), fear of conflict (teams that lack trust are unable to engage in passionate debate about key issues), lack of commitment (without healthy conflict, team members rarely buy in and commit to decisions), avoidance of accountability (without real commitment, team members develop an avoidance of accountability), and inattention to results (failure to hold one another accountable creates an environment where team members put their individual needs above collective results). Lencioni argues these dysfunctions are both common and surmountable when leaders create psychological safety and establish clear processes for healthy team dynamics.

Top 10 Takeaways:

1. **Trust is foundational** - Teams must create an environment where members feel safe to be vulnerable, admit mistakes, and ask for help without fear of judgment or retribution.
2. **Healthy conflict is essential** - Teams need to engage in passionate, unfiltered debate around ideas and issues, not personal attacks, to reach the best possible decisions.

3. **Commitment requires clarity and buy-in** - Team members must genuinely commit to decisions and plans of action, even when they initially disagreed with the direction.
4. **Accountability must be peer-to-peer** - The most effective teams hold each other accountable rather than relying solely on the leader to be the source of accountability.
5. **Results trump individual agendas** - Team members must prioritize collective outcomes over personal goals, recognition, or departmental objectives.
6. **Vulnerability-based trust differs from predictive trust** - Real team trust comes from members being comfortable showing weakness and making mistakes in front of each other, not just reliability.
7. **Artificial harmony is destructive** - Teams that avoid conflict in the name of harmony actually create tension and resentment that undermines effectiveness.
8. **Consensus is not required for commitment** - Team members can commit to decisions they don't fully agree with if they feel their opinions were heard and considered.
9. **Leaders must model the behaviors they want to see** - Creating high-functioning teams requires leaders to demonstrate vulnerability, encourage healthy debate, and hold themselves accountable first.
10. **The dysfunctions are progressive** - Each dysfunction builds upon the previous one, meaning teams must address trust before they can tackle conflict, and so on through the pyramid.