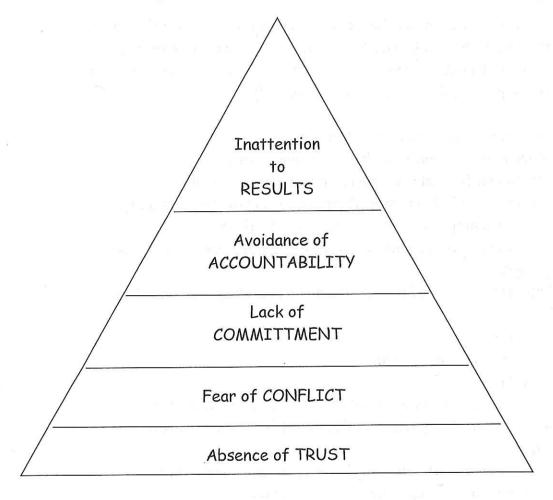# Handout for
The five dysfunctions of a team by Patrick Lencioni
SW 691-Macro Practice 1

Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team: A leadership fable..* San
 Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The five team dysfunctions (Lencioni, 2002, p. 188):

Inattention
to
RESULTS

Avoidance of
ACCOUNTABILITY

Lack of
COMMITTMENT

Fear of CONFLICT

Absence of TRUST

Cohesive teams:
- *Trust* one another
- Engage in unfiltered *conflict* about ideas
- They *commit* to decisions and plans of action
- They hold one another accountable for delivering against those plans
- They focus on achievement of collective results

Dysfunction #1 Absence of Trust

What is TRUST?
- In teams, trust equals confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good and there's no need to be protective or careful.
- Therefore, trust is NOT the ability to predict a person's behavior based on past experience.

GREAT TEAMS:
- Require members to make themselves vulnerable to each other and be confident that their vulnerabilities will not be used against them.
- VULNERABILITIES? Weaknesses, skill deficiencies, interpersonal shortcomings, mistakes, and requests for help

Members of teams with an absence of trust...
- Conceal weaknesses and mistakes from one another
- Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback
- Hesitate to offer help outside their own areas of responsibility
- Jump to conclusions about the intentions of others
- Fail to recognize and tap into one another's skills and experiences
- Hold grudges
- Dread meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time together

Members of trusting teams...
- Admit weaknesses and mistakes
- Ask for help
- Accept questions and input about their areas of responsibility
- Give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a negative conclusion
- Appreciate and tap into one another's skills and experiences
- Offer and accept apologies without hesitation
- Look forward to meetings and other opportunities to work as a group

How do you OVERCOME dysfunction 1 and build TRUST?
- Requires shared experiences over time
- Involves Multiple instances of follow-through and credibility
- Understanding of unique attributes of team members
- The leader must demonstrate vulnerability first

Connection to dysfunction 2: Team members who trust each other, are not afraid to engage in conflict and debate around ideas.

Dysfunction #2 Fear of Conflict

There's a difference between productive IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT and DESTRUCTVE FIGHTING:

IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT:
(a) Limited to concepts and ideas and is not personality-focused, mean-spirited.
(b) Goal is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time.
(c) Healthy conflict is often a time-saver; the same issues are not revisited.

How do you OVERCOME dysfunction 2 and engage in CONFLICT?

- Acknowledge that "conflict is good, productive; many teams try and avoid it."

Teams that fear conflict...
- Have boring meetings
- Create environments where back-channel politics and personal attacks thrive
- Ignore controversial topics that are critical to team success
- Fail to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members
- Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management

Teams that engage in conflict...
- Have lively, interesting meetings
- Extract and exploit the ideas of all team members
- Solve real problems quickly
- Minimize politics
- Put critical topics on the table for discussion

Leaders must:
- Mine for conflict: call out sensitive issues and help the team work through it
- Give real-time permission to engage in the healthy debate
- Allow the conflict to resolve naturally, and not protect team members

Connection to dysfunction 3: by engaging in productive conflict and getting different perspectives and opinions, teams can confidently commit to decisions knowing that all have participated

Dysfunction #3 Lack of Commitment

COMMITMENT is a function of clarity and buy-in

The 2 greatest causes for the lack of commitment are CONSENSUS and NEED FOR CERTAINTY

CONSENSUS: 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. If there's an impasse, leader decides.

CERTAINTY: great teams are able to unit behind a course of action even with little assurance

A team that fails to commit...
- Creates ambiguity among the team about direction and priorities
- Conducts excessive analyses and unnecessary delays
- Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure
- Revisits discussions and decisions again and again
- Encourages second-guessing among team members

A team that commits:
- Creates clarity around direction and priorities
- Aligns the entire team around common objectives
- Develops an ability to learn from mistakes
- Moves forward without hesitation
- Changes direction without hesitation or guilt

How do you OVERCOME dysfunction 3 and get teams to COMMIT?

- Take a few minutes at the end of a meeting to review key decisions
- Use clear deadlines
- Discuss contingency plans

Connection to dysfunction 4: to hold team members accountable, teams must have a clear sense of what is expected

Dysfunction #4 Avoidance of Accountability

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

Failure to do this, can cause relationships to deteriorate because team members resent one another for not living up to expectations.

A team that avoids accountability...
- Creates resentment among members who have different performance standards
- Encourages mediocrity
- Misses deadlines
- Places an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline

A team that holds one another accountable...
- Ensures that poor performers feel pressure to improve
- Identifies potential problems quickly by questioning one another's approaches without hesitation
- Establishes respect among team members who are held to the same high standards
- Avoids excessive bureaucracy around performance management and corrective action

How do you OVERCOME dysfunction 4 and get teams to hold each other ACCOUNTABLE?
- Publish goals and standards of what exactly needs to be done
- Communicate regularly with one another about goals, give feedback
- Create a culture of team rewards
- Accountability is a shared team approach

Connection to dysfunction 5: if teams are not held accountable, they will focus more on individual needs and their own advancement, instead of the team.

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.

Besides results, teams focus on: team status, individual status (the results of the group are more important to each individual than individual members' goals.

A team that is not focused on results...
- Stagnates/fails to grow
- Rarely defeats competitors
- Loses achievement-oriented employees
- Encourages team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals
- Is easily distracted

A team that focuses on collective results...
- Retains achievement-oriented employees
- Minimizes individualistic behavior
- Enjoys success and suffers failure acutely
- Benefits from individuals who subjugate their own goals/interests for the good of the team
- Avoids distractions

How do you OVERCOME dysfunction 5 and get teams to pay attention to COLLECTIVE results?

- Public declaration of results
- Results-based rewards