

The dysfunctions that we mentioned above usually build up on one another, but if even a single one of them is allowed to flourish, the teamwork will deteriorate. Now we are going to address the dysfunctions one by one, and give you some guidelines on how to approach them in case you notice them in your team. After every dysfunction, we will provide you with some practical tools that should be helpful in case you decide to use this model.

1. ABSENCE OF TRUST

In the context of this part of the guide, trust means the confidence among team members that their intentions are good and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group. Building trust is probably the most important part of Lencioni's model, because it sets the foundation every team should build upon.

You can recognize if your team is struggling with this dysfunction if the team members do some of the following:

- Hide their weaknesses and mistakes from one another
- Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback (*to give constructive feedback to a team member, try to present it in a way of help and guidance; it is important to be honest, respectful and to allow your team members to explain why they are doing something differently*)
- Hesitate to offer help outside of their own tasks (*this is where we need to remember this TEAM part in the word Teamwork – even if you do your task perfectly, your team might still fail to achieve the goal you set for yourselves if there is no mutual support*)
- Jump to conclusions about the intentions of others without asking for clarification (*for example, if your team members become upset when receiving feedback or being asked if they need help*)
- Fail to recognize and tap into one another's skills and experiences
- Waste time and energy discussing topics irrelevant to the purpose of the team (*for example, discussing politics during team meetings, while it has nothing to do with what your team is trying to achieve*)
- Hold grudges (*for example, getting offended when someone gives you feedback, and just waiting for the opportunity to get back at them*)
- Avoid meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time together

If you are in the role of the leader, and your team is experiencing this dysfunction, you should be the one to demonstrate vulnerability first, and aim to create an environment that does not punish or ridicule vulnerability. Below you will find a tool that should help you start addressing this dysfunction of your team:

TOOL: Personal Histories

Time required: 30 minutes

This exercise is used to take the first steps towards developing trust. The only things you are going to need for it are some pens and paper! During this exercise, your team members are going to have to answer some questions about themselves, such as:

- *Number of siblings*
- *Hometown*
- *Hobbies*
- *Unique challenges*
- *Favorite type of music*
- *Favorite movie*

You can add more questions to this list, or you can change any of them into something more fitting for your team. After everyone is done with answering the questions, each one of you is going to read aloud the answers one by one. This exercise is used to get to understand your team members more, and puts you on a fast track to break down the initial barriers!

2. FEAR OF CONFLICT

The second dysfunction we are going to address is Fear of Conflict. If your team has successfully built the foundation of trust, engaging in constructive discussions should be possible. Why is that? Well, if you and your team members all trust each other, you will feel much freer to express your own opinions, because you will know that there will be no judgment. However, many teams have a tendency to avoid (productive) conflict and consider it unnecessary.

If you and your team members do the following, you might be dealing with this dysfunction:

- *Have boring meetings (as in, meetings where there are no discussions and no one voices their opinion, because they are afraid that they are going to be judged),*
- *Have created an environment in which gossip and personal attacks are common (for example, talking behind the back of team members, allowing during discussions...)*
- *Ignore topics that are critical to team success (deadlines, responsibilities, briefings on what was done...),*
- *Fail to consider all the opinions and perspectives of team members (of course, this doesn't mean to just agree with all the options – it means to consider all of them, and choose the best ones),*
- *Waste time and energy on unrelated topics*

If you are in the role of the team leader while trying to deal with this dysfunction, you should try to demonstrate restraint when people engage in conflict, and allow resolution to occur naturally. Of course, you will need to moderate it and “put it back on track”, if your team members take it in a direction where it becomes irrelevant for the team.

TOOL: Real-Time Permission

This exercise can happen naturally when your team is sharing ideas or looking for solutions to problems that have come up. What you need to do is to recognize when people who are engaged in the conflict (debate, discussion) are becoming uncomfortable with the level of tension, and then interrupt them by reminding them why this is necessary (mentioning the good of the team). Interrupting to put focus back on the good of the team is a good way to break tension and prevent the discussion from becoming personal.

3. LACK OF COMMITMENT

According to Lencioni, two greatest causes for the lack of commitment are the desire for consensus and the need for certainty. When it comes to consensus, if you and your team members expressed your opinions, and if all of them have been addressed, it is going to be a lot easier to commit to the plan of action you come up with, even if it was not your proposition that the team finally went with. Because you will know that you were heard. When it comes to certainty, he says that any decision is better than no decision, even if that decision turns out to be wrong. In case the decision turns out to be wrong, it is important that you react and change it as soon as possible, because procrastination is going to introduce uncertainty, and make everything worse.

You will know that your team is affected by this dysfunction, if it:

- Allows for more than one interpretation of direction and priorities,
- Breaks deadlines because of excessive analysis and procrastination,
- Shows lack of confidence and is too afraid of failure,
- Discusses the same decisions multiple times, and
- Encourages second-guessing among team members

If you are in the position of the team leader, you must be comfortable with making a decision that can turn out to be wrong – because even if it turns out like that, you avoided uncertainty and gave your team something to work towards. You should also check if everyone is following deadlines and schedule that the team has agreed upon.

TOOL: Deadlines

One of the best tools for ensuring commitment is the use of clear deadlines. This means that when tasks are given to the members of your team, everyone needs to know exactly until when they have to finish their tasks – nothing should be open to interpretation. There should be more than just one, final, deadline – you should put deadlines for various milestones on the path to completing the goal of your team. Every time you reach one of the milestones, your team should meet and see if all the deadlines were respected. If you organize your deadlines like this, you will be able to identify which tasks need to be prioritized or more team members assigned to, before it is too late.

TOOL: Cascading messages

Minimum time required: 10 minutes

This exercise doesn't take long, and you should do it after every team meeting. After the meeting is done and decisions were made, they should be repeated so that everyone is on the same page. The less things you leave for interpretation, the more effective your team is going to be. By doing this, you make sure that everyone in the team has understood everything in the same way, and you avoid uncertainty.

TOOL: Contingency and Worst-Case Scenario Analysis

This exercise is supposed to help you address the fears you might have regarding decisions of your team. As the name says, during a team meeting, you can discuss contingency plan with your team, or even do a worst-case scenario analysis, in which you approach a decision you are considering in a way that you try to analyse how things would be if everything went wrong. Usually this leads to reducing fears of your team members, because most often the costs of incorrect decisions are “survivable”, and fixable.

4. AVOIDANCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The next dysfunction we are going to address is avoidance of accountability. As we mentioned above, this refers to the willingness of you and your team members to call each other out on behavior that might hurt the team. For example – calling your teammates out on not finishing their tasks within deadlines, on not doing their task with enough care (resulting in lowered quality)... A team who is suffering this disfunction usually:

- Creates resentment among team members who have different standards or performance,
- Encourages, and is satisfied with, mediocrity,
- Misses deadlines,
- Places unnecessary burden on the team leader to be the only source of discipline.

If you are the team leader, you should encourage and allow the team to be the primary accountability mechanism – meaning that it shouldn't all be just on you. Team members should feel comfortable and permitted to hold each other accountable for the agreed tasks. Your task as a team leader would be to be there to introduce discipline, if the team fails in this.

TOOL: Publication of Goals and Standards

This is an easy tool you can use to encourage accountability within your team. After it has been decided what tasks each of your team members should accomplish, you can publish it as a list on the media that you use to communicate with your team. It can be either a social media group, or even written on a paper, if you meet with your team in person at the same place. This way, everyone knows who is responsible for what, and it can be easily checked.

TOOL: Briefings

Briefings are a great tool to use to show the whole team how you are progressing on a bigger scale. Briefings should be done twice per week at the end of the day (you can, of course, adapt it to fit the needs of your team). How it works is that every member of the team is invited to explain how they are progressing with their tasks and what has been done since the previous briefing. This way, everyone is kept in the loop of what the other team members are doing and is the progress towards the final goal.

5. INATTENTION TO RESULT

The final dysfunction and according to Lencioni - the ultimate one, is inattention to result. In his book, he identifies 2 types of obstacles that take away the focus from the result – team status and individual status. When it comes to Team status, this is would apply to people who are satisfied by just being part of the group, and do not care about the result itself (imagine being a part of football team, coming to trainings, hanging out with the rest of your team members, but not really trying to improve your football skills – or avoiding to come every time there is a competitive match you were supposed to play in). Individual status would be almost the opposite. If we take the same example with the football team, in this case you would be too focused on improving your football skills, you would not want to integrate with your team, you would demand from your coach to let you play in every match, you wouldn't be willing to pass the ball to your team-mates – all because you want to be “picked up” by a better team. How do you recognize that your team is suffering from this dysfunction? Well, a team that is not focused on results:

- Fails to grow,
- Rarely defeats competitors (*you can be the best football player in the world, but you can't win the game on your own*),
- Loses achievement-oriented members,
- Encourages team members to focus on their individual goals, and
- is easily distracted (*if everyone is focusing on their own, individual thing, no one is focusing on the team result*).

If you are in the position of the team leader, you should set the focus on team results, be objective and give recognition to those who make a real contribution to the achievement of the group goals.

TOOL: Public Declaration

One of the tools you can use to combat this dysfunction is public declaration. What this means is to “promise” or commit that your team is going to achieve a certain result. For example, if you are a member of a team that is organizing an annual festival, you can advertise that this year, your festival is going to be better than it was last year. This helps your team to stay motivated while pursuing the promised result.