The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

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- Book presented as a practical tool to apply following the class.

- Focus on identifying high-performing vs. dysfunctional teams using the Five Dysfunctions model.

- Model is represented as a five-level pyramid; each level builds on the one below and cannot function independently.

Dysfunction 1: Absence of Trust (Foundation)

- Trust is the foundation of teamwork and the most critical element of team success.

- Defined as confidence that team members have positive intentions and are not acting in self-interest.

- Trust allows vulnerability, openness, and honesty without fear of judgment.

- Lack of trust leads to defensiveness, competition, and reluctance to admit weaknesses or ask for help.

- Without trust, teams expend energy on appearances rather than work.

Indicators

- Fear of vulnerability

- Lack of openness

- Defensive or competitive behavior

Suggestions for Overcoming

- Personal Histories Exercise: Share basic personal background information to build familiarity.

- Team Effectiveness Exercise: Identify strengths and growth areas in teammates.

- Personality/Behavior Profiles: Increase empathy and understanding of differences.

- Leader Role: Model vulnerability, admit mistakes, and prevent harsh criticism.

Connection to Dysfunction 2

- Trust enables productive conflict without fear of damaging relationships.

Dysfunction 2: Fear of Conflict

- Healthy conflict is necessary for growth and innovation.

- Teams often confuse ideological conflict (ideas) with interpersonal conflict (personal attacks).

- Avoiding conflict creates artificial harmony and unresolved tension.

Indicators

- Suppressed opinions

- Passive agreement

- Unspoken frustrations

Suggestions for Overcoming

- Mining for Conflict: Encourage surfacing unspoken issues.

- Real-Time Permission: Leaders reassure teams that conflict is productive and encouraged.

- Conflict Style Tools: Understand individual responses to conflict (e.g., conflict assessments).

- Leader Role: Allow conflict to occur and resist over-managing or shutting it down.

Connection to Dysfunction 3

- Open debate is necessary for commitment and buy-in.

Dysfunction 3: Lack of Commitment

- Commitment requires clarity and buy-in, not consensus.

- Consensus often leads to watered-down decisions and ambiguity.

- Teams commit when they feel heard, even if their ideas are not chosen.

- Fear of uncertainty prevents timely decision-making.

Indicators

- Ambiguity

- Second-guessing decisions

- Lack of alignment

Suggestions for Overcoming

- Cascading Messages: Leaders clearly communicate decisions after meetings.

- Deadlines: Set clear timeframes for decisions and milestones.

- Contingency/Worst-Case Planning: Reduce fear by acknowledging risks.

- Low-Risk Exposure Therapy: Make decisions without over-analysis to build confidence.

- Leader Role: Be comfortable with mistakes, enforce deadlines, and avoid encouraging consensus.

Connection to Dysfunction 4

- Without commitment, accountability cannot exist.

Dysfunction 4: Avoidance of Accountability

- Accountability ensures high standards of performance and behavior.

- Teams often avoid holding peers accountable to prevent discomfort.

- Avoidance leads to low standards and growing resentment.

Indicators

- Missed expectations

- Tolerance of poor performance

- Reluctance to address issues

Suggestions for Overcoming

- Public Goals and Standards: Clearly define expectations and timelines.

- Regular Progress Reviews: Peer-based feedback rather than self-assessments.

- Team-Based Rewards: Reinforce shared responsibility for outcomes.

- Leader Role: Encourage peer accountability and intervene only when necessary.

Connection to Dysfunction 5

- Lack of accountability shifts focus away from team results.

Dysfunction 5: Inattention to Results

- Team success must outweigh individual ego or status.

- When teams lose sight of collective goals, individual priorities take over.

Indicators

- Focus on individual success or departmental goals

- Emphasis on status rather than outcomes

Common Distractions

- Team Status: Pride in belonging without focus on outcomes.

- Individual Status: Career advancement prioritized over team success.

Suggestions for Overcoming

- Public Declaration of Results: Clearly state goals and expectations.

- Results-Based Rewards: Tie recognition and incentives to outcomes.

- Leader Role: Continuously emphasize results and recognize contributors fairly.

Final Thoughts

- Team dysfunction is natural and rooted in human behavior.

- Fixing a team is challenging and often uncomfortable.

- Rebuilding trust and alignment takes time and consistent effort.

- Continuous practice and reinforcement can transform team performance over time.