



2. PRINCIPLES OF GROUP VS TEAM

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Notes based on the work of Patrick Lencioni's work, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*

GOAL RESULT FOCUS

A team that is not focused on results...

Stagnates/fails to grow

Rarely defeats challenges

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

TRUST

Trust is the confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good, and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group. This description stands in contrast to a more standard definition of trust, one that centers around the ability to predict a person's behavior based on past experience. For instance, one might "trust" that a given teammate will produce high-quality work because he has always done so in the past. As desirable as this may be, it is not enough to represent the kind of trust that is characteristic of a great team. It requires team members to make themselves vulnerable to one another, and be confident that their respective vulnerabilities will not be used against them. The vulnerabilities I'm referring to include weaknesses, skill deficiencies, interpersonal shortcomings, mistakes, and requests for help.

As "soft" as all of this might sound, it is only when team members are truly comfortable being exposed to one another that they begin to act without concern for protecting themselves. As a result, they can focus their energy and attention completely on the job at hand, rather than on being strategically disingenuous or political with one another.

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Members of teams with an absence of trust...

Conceal their 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 and aptitudes of others without attempting to clarify them
Fail to recognize and tap into one another's skills and experiences
Waste time and energy managing their behaviors for effect
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
Take risks in offering feedback and assistance
Appreciate and tap into one another's skills and experiences
Focus time and energy on important issues, not politics
Offer and accept apologies without hesitation
Look forward to meetings and other opportunities to work as a group

CONFLICT

All great relationships, the ones that last over time, require **productive conflict** in order to grow. This is true in marriage, parenthood, friendship, and even in the Church! It is important to distinguish productive ideological conflict from destructive fighting and interpersonal politics.

But teams that engage in **productive conflict** know that the only purpose is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time. They discuss and resolve issues more quickly and completely than others, and they emerge from heated debates with no residual feelings or collateral damage, but with an eagerness and readiness to take on the next important issue. Ironically, teams that avoid healthy conflict often do so in order to avoid hurting team members' feelings, and then end up encouraging dangerous tension. Contrary to the notion that teams waste time and energy arguing, those that avoid conflict actually doom themselves to revisiting issues again and again without resolution.

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

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Teams that engage in conflict...

Have lively, interesting meetings
Extract and exploit the ideas of all team members
Solve real problems quickly
Minimize politics
Are comfortable putting critical topics on the table for discussion

COMMITMENT

In the context of a team, commitment is a function of two things: clarity and buy-in. Great teams make clear and timely decisions and move forward with complete buy-in from every member of the team, even those who voted against the decision. They leave meetings confident that no one on the team is quietly harboring doubts about whether to support the actions agreed on.

Why would we not be committed?

The two greatest causes of the lack of commitment are; the desire for consensus and the need for certainty.

In terms of 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 and considered.

In terms of certainty... Great teams also pride themselves on being able to unite behind decisions and commit to clear courses of action even when there is little assurance about whether the decision is correct. They also realize that it is better to make a decision boldly and be wrong-and then change direction with equal boldness-than it is to waffle.

A team that fails to commit...

Creates ambiguity among the team about direction and priorities
Watches windows of opportunity close due to excessive analysis/unnecessary delay
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

To reinforce commitments made by the team...

REVIEW KEY DECISIONS MADE

At the end of a meeting, explicitly review the key decisions made during the meeting, and agree on what needs to be communicated to others about those decisions.

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SET DEADLINES FOR ACTION

The worst enemy of a team that is susceptible to this dysfunction is ambiguity, and timing is one of the most critical factors that must be made clear. Deadlines ensure that misalignment among team members is identified and addressed before the costs are too great.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is the willingness of team members to call their peers on performance commitments made to the team or behaviors exhibited that might hurt the team. The most effective and efficient means of maintaining high standards of **performance** on a team is peer pressure.

More than any policy or system, there is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their performance.

A team that avoids accountability...

Creates resentment among team members who have different standards of performance

Encourages mediocrity

Misses deadlines and key deliverables

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

Suggestions for Overcoming Avoidance of Accountability

Publication of Goals and Standards

Simple and Regular Progress Reviews

Team Rewards - as opposed to individual rewards

