

TEAM BUILDING

in the
Virtual World

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Pre-Session Recommended Reading
The Five Traits of Healthy Teams

The Five Traits of Healthy Teams

Overview

Prior to the event, we recommend everyone familiarize themselves with the *five traits of a healthy team* by reading the following excerpts from the book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, the teamwork model upon which we've based your upcoming team building session.

At the Team Building session, we will learn about and practice establishing the vulnerability-based **trust** required on their teams to improve their team's health.

After reading this summary and completing the Team Building session, everyone will be able to:

- Identify and describe the five traits of a healthy team
- Create a healthier team starting with the building of vulnerability-based trust

Meeting these objectives will lay the foundation for teams to be able to help grow the company, increase their earning potential, produce greater results, and provide a greater client experience.

The Model

All teams are potentially dysfunctional. This is inevitable because they are made up of fallible, imperfect human beings. Politics and confusion are more the rule than the exception. But the power of teamwork is great. The founder of a billion-dollar company best expressed that power when he once said, "If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time."

Whenever a group of leaders hears this adage, they immediately nod their heads, but in a desperate sort of way. They seem to grasp the truth of it while simultaneously surrendering to the impossibility of actually making it happen. Fortunately, the causes of dysfunction are both identifiable and curable. However, they don't die easily. Making a team functional and cohesive requires **extraordinary levels of courage and discipline**.

The Rewards

Striving to create a functional, cohesive team is one of the few remaining competitive advantages available to any organization looking for a powerful point of differentiation. Functional teams get more accomplished in less time than other teams because they avoid wasting time on the wrong issues and revisiting the same topics again and again. They also make higher quality decisions and stick to those decisions by eliminating politics and confusion among themselves and the people they lead. Finally, functional teams keep their best employees longer because "A" players rarely leave organizations where they are part of, or being led by, a cohesive team. The following section provides an overview of the five behavioral challenges all teams must continuously work to avoid.

The Five Dysfunctions of Teams



The Five Dysfunctions of Teams

Dysfunction #1: **Absence of Trust** - *The fear of being vulnerable with team members prevents the building of trust within the team.* This occurs when team members are reluctant to be vulnerable with one another, and are thus unwilling to admit their mistakes, acknowledge their weaknesses or ask for help. Without a certain comfort level among team members, a foundation of trust is impossible.

Dysfunction #2: **Fear of Conflict** - *The desire to preserve artificial harmony stifles the occurrence of productive ideological conflict.* Trust is critical because without it, teams are unlikely to engage in unfiltered, passionate debate about key issues. This creates two problems. First, stifling conflict actually increases the likelihood of destructive, back channel sniping. Second, it leads to sub-optimal decision-making because the team is not benefiting from the true ideas and perspectives of its members.

Dysfunction #3: **Lack of Commitment** - *The lack of clarity or buy-in prevents team members from making decisions they will stick to.* Without conflict, it is extremely difficult for team members to truly commit to decisions because they don't feel that they are part of the decision. This often creates an environment of ambiguity and confusion in an organization, leading to frustration among employees, especially top performers.

Dysfunction #4: **Avoidance of Accountability** - *The need to avoid interpersonal discomfort prevents team members from holding one another accountable.* When teams don't commit to a clear plan of action, peer-to-peer accountability suffers greatly. Even the most focused and driven individuals will hesitate to call their peers on counterproductive actions and behaviors if they believe those actions and behaviors were never agreed upon in the first place.

Dysfunction #5: **Inattention to Results** - *The pursuit of individual goals and personal status erodes the focus on collective success.* When team members are not holding one another accountable, they increase the likelihood that individual ego and recognition will become more important than collective team results. When this occurs, the business suffers and the team starts to unravel. The following section provides an overview of the five traits all teams must continuously work to develop.

The Five Traits of a Healthy Team



Trait #1: Building Trust

Team members who trust one another are comfortable being open, even exposed, to one another about their failures, weaknesses and fears. Teams need to develop vulnerability-based trust amongst members. When trust is built, team members are comfortable acknowledging their own weaknesses and the strengths of others. The best way for trust to be built is for the team leader to set the example, so that the members feel comfortable following.

Trait #2: Mastering **Healthy Conflict**

When trust is present, teams are able to engage in unfiltered ideological debate around ideas, issues and decisions that must be made. Healthy conflict refers to the team's ability to passionately disagree and have productive debates about issues of importance to the team. In order for healthy conflict to occur, all team members must trust one another to focus on the issue at hand and not let politics, pride, or competition interfere. It is important to focus on listening to other people to hear what they are saying, not to formulate your response. All team members must be willing to be uncomfortable during healthy conflict, knowing that the resulting decisions will be stronger for it.

Trait #3: Achieving **Commitment**

When teams are able to engage in healthy conflict and provide input, members are better able to commit to team decisions. There are two aspects to obtaining full commitment from team members: buy-in and clarity. When all team members share their ideas and input on an issue, and feel that they have been heard, it is easier for them to buy in to the final decision, even if their idea isn't chosen. It is vital that all members are clear about the final decision so they know what they've agreed to.

Trait #4: Embracing **Accountability**

After commitment is established, team members must be willing to hold one another accountable and remind each other when actions are counterproductive to the team. When team members are truly committed, it is much easier for the team to embrace accountability. The appropriate behavior needs to be modeled by the team leader; in order for team members to feel comfortable holding each other accountable, they need to know that the leader will too. By communicating team decisions, all team members know what has been agreed to and can hold each other accountable to it.

Trait #5: Focusing on **Results**

Collective team results must supersede any departmental or personal objectives or pursuits. In order for the team to be truly successful, the members need to eliminate self-interest and self-preservation. The focus needs to be on the team results rather than individual results. All members need to be explicitly clear on what the team goals are and what they must do to accomplish them.