



HOW DYSFUNCTIONAL IS YOUR TEAM?



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Like it or not, all teams are potentially dysfunctional. Team dysfunction is inevitable because people are unique and diverse. From the hockey arena to the executive suite, politics and confusion are more the rule than the exception.

However, facing dysfunction and focusing on teamwork is particularly critical at the top of an organization because the executive team sets the tone for how all employees work with one another.

Take a few minutes to reflect on these questions:

- Do you want to increase the speed at which your organization moves?
- Would you like to minimize delays and surprises in projects?
- Do you want better-quality decision-making from your team?
- Are you frustrated with a half-hearted commitment to initiatives?
- Can your team quickly course correct when things go sideways?
- Is your team focused on the collective results of the business or their department?

THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM MODEL

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, they immediately nod their heads, but in a desperate way. They seem to grasp the truth while simultaneously surrendering to the impossibility of making it happen.

Fortunately, the causes of dysfunction are both identifiable and curable.

Making the team functional and cohesive requires extraordinary levels of courage and discipline. The following section provides an overview of the five behavioural challenges all teams must continuously work to avoid.

THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM



ABSENCE OF TRUST

The **absence of trust** occurs when team members are reluctant to be vulnerable with one another and are unwilling to admit their mistakes, weaknesses, or needs for help. Without a certain comfort level among team members, a foundation of trust is impossible.

Dysfunctional Teams:

- Don't ask each other for help.
- Hide mistakes and conceal weaknesses.
- Won't discuss the challenges they are facing.
- Dread the accountability of team meetings.



FEAR OF CONFLICT

Teams lacking trust cannot engage in unfiltered, passionate debate about key issues, causing team conflict to turn into veiled discussions and back-channel comments easily. In a work setting where team members refrain from openly airing their opinions, bad decisions result.

Dysfunctional Teams:

- Tolerate artificial harmony and avoid ideological discussions.
- Dance around issues and problems.
- Avoid decision-making—or make poor decisions.



LACK OF COMMITMENT

Without conflict, it is difficult for team members to commit to decisions, creating an environment where ambiguity prevails. Lack of direction and commitment can make employees, particularly star employees, disgruntled.

Dysfunctional Teams:

- Complain about ambiguous direction and priorities.
- Waste time in unproductive “Meetings after the Meeting.”
- Revisit discussions again and again without resolution.
- Experience increased absenteeism.

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AVOIDANCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

When teams don't commit to a clear action plan, even the most focused and driven individuals hesitate to call their peers on actions and behaviours that may seem counterproductive to the team's overall success.

Dysfunctional Teams:

- Miss deadlines and deliverables.
- Tolerate poor performers creating resentment.
- Create an unhealthy two-tier culture of performers and underperformers.
- Do not confront challenging issues or behaviours.

INATTENTION TO RESULTS

Team members naturally tend to put their own needs (ego, career development, recognition, etc.) ahead of the team's collective goals when individuals aren't held accountable. If a team has lost sight of the need for achievement, the business ultimately suffers.

Dysfunctional Teams:

- Consistently miss performance targets.
- Generate mediocre results.
- Experience high turnover of the best people.
- Miss project deadlines and go over budget.



ADDRESSING THE DYSFUNCTIONS

Now that you have an overview of the model, the next step is to assess your team quickly.

The primary purpose of this short DIY assessment is to provide your team with a sense of its strengths and areas for improvement.

While this short assessment is not as quantitative as our comprehensive online assessment, it still provides immediate value as an indicative first look at your team's health.

The most important aspect is the qualitative perspective it provides for your team and the discussion it provokes around specific issues.

Although no team is perfect, and even the best teams sometimes struggle with one or more of these issues, the finest organizations constantly work to ensure their answers are "yes." If you answered "no" to many of these questions, your team might need some work.

The first step toward reducing politics and confusion within your team is to understand that there are five dysfunctions to contend with and address each that applies, one by one.

HOW DYSFUNCTIONAL IS YOUR TEAM?

Instructions: Use the scale below to indicate how each statement applies to your team. Be sure to evaluate the statements honestly and without overthinking your answers.

3 = Usually

2 = Sometimes

1 = Rarely

1. ____ Team members are passionate and unguarded in their discussion of issues.
2. ____ Team members call out one another's deficiencies or unproductive behaviours.
3. ____ Team members know what their peers are working on and how they contribute to the collective good of the team.
4. ____ Team members quickly and genuinely apologize to one another when they say or do something inappropriate or possibly damaging to the team.
5. ____ Team members willingly make sacrifices (such as budget, turf, head count) in their departments or areas of expertise for the good of the team.
6. ____ Team members openly admit their weaknesses and mistakes.
7. ____ Team meetings are compelling and not boring.
8. ____ Team members leave meetings confident that their peers are completely committed to the decisions agreed upon during the meeting, even there was initial disagreement.
9. ____ Morale is significantly affected by the failure to achieve team goals.
10. ____ During team meetings, the most important and most difficult issues are put on the table to be resolved.
11. ____ Team members are deeply concerned about the prospect of letting down their peers.
12. ____ Team members know about one another's personal lives and are comfortable discussing them.
13. ____ Team members end discussions with clear and specific resolutions and calls to action.
14. ____ Team members challenge one another about their plans and approaches.
15. ____ Team members are slow to seek credit for their own contributions but quick to point out those of others.

HOW DYSFUNCTIONAL IS YOUR TEAM?

Individual Scoring

Combine your scores for the fifteen statements as indicated below.

| Dysfunction #1: Absence of Trust | Dysfunction #2: Fear of Conflict | Dysfunction #3: Lack of Commitment | Dysfunction #4: Avoidance of Accountability | Dysfunction #5: Inattention to Results |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Statement 4 ____ | Statement 1 ____ | Statement 3 ____ | Statement 2 ____ | Statement 5 ____ |
| Statement 6 ____ | Statement 7 ____ | Statement 8 ____ | Statement 11 ____ | Statement 9 ____ |
| Statement 12 ____ | Statement 10 ____ | Statement 13 ____ | Statement 14 ____ | Statement 15 ____ |
| Total: | Total: | Total: | Total: | Total: |

- A score of 8 or 9 indicates that the dysfunction is probably not a problem for your team.
- A score of 6 or 7 indicates that the dysfunction could be a problem.
- A score of 3 to indicates that the dysfunction needs to be addressed.

The 90-Minute DIY Team Tune-Up

The 90-Minute DIY Team Tune-Up is a practical, actionable solution to kick off your journey toward building a High-Performance organization.

1. Give the team members time to complete the Team Assessment.
(10 Minutes)
2. Ask team members to share their individual responses.
3. Average the team members' responses to determine the overall score for each dysfunction.
4. Ask the group for their insight on why the team scored the way it did. (You can break the group into smaller subgroups of three or four people and have them discuss why specific questions scored exceptionally high or low.)
5. Record their responses on flip charts or whiteboards for reference during the session.
6. Clarify any misunderstandings or confusion around any highlighted questions.

Fortunately, turning your dysfunctional team into a high-performing one takes little time. In fact, within a few hours and at no cost, you can create a breakthrough with your team.

LEADING TEAMS THROUGH THE FIVE BEHAVIOURS

► Trust

It's the leader's job to demonstrate vulnerability-based trust to the team.

- Encourage trust by demonstrating vulnerability first and again and again and again.
- Team members help each other and leverage strengths for the team.
- Create a safe environment where team members can speak up.

► Conflict

It's the leader's job to demand debate and push the team to pursue the best ideas.

- An everyday challenge leaders face in promoting healthy conflict is the desire to protect members from hurt feelings.
- Protecting prevents team members from developing coping skills for dealing with conflict.
- It's essential to model good conflict. Leaders need to mine for conflict and encourage healthy debate of ideas.

► Commitment

It's the leader's job to push for all-in commitment around decisions.

- Leaders must be comfortable with the prospect of decisions that ultimately turn out wrong.
- What the leader CAN'T do is place a high premium on certainty (a decision is better than no decision) or consensus.
- The leader must constantly push the group for closure around issues and adhere to the team's schedules.

LEADING TEAMS THROUGH THE FIVE BEHAVIOURS

► **Accountability** It's the leader's job to encourage peers to call out unproductive behaviours.

- Leaders must encourage and allow the team to serve as the first and primary accountability mechanism.
- But when needed, the leader must still confront complex issues when the team does not, although that should be rare.

► **Results** It's the leader's job to communicate the difference between Team #1 vs. Team #2 constantly.

- Leaders must set the tone for focusing on results and pay attention to collective outcomes.
- Team leaders must be selfless and objective and reserve rewards and recognition for those who contribute to achieving group goals.

THE REWARDS OF A HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAM

Working 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. If you dare to be vulnerable and embrace healthy conflict, you will be well on your way to alleviating some of your pain points.

- Healthy teams move forward faster and minimize confusion along the way.
- Functional teams avoid wasting time repeatedly discussing the wrong issues and revisiting the same topics because of a lack of buy-in.
- High-Performance teams also make higher-quality decisions and accomplish more in less time and with less distraction and frustration.
- Aligned teams generate outstanding and recurring team results.
- High-Performance teams are motivated and highly engaged.
- High-Performance teams create a safe environment where people can speak up.
- Engaged teams leverage each other's strengths and help each other.
- High-Performance teams are focused and aligned on shared objectives.
- High-Performance teams have clear direction and priorities.
- High-Performance teams quickly confront problems and issues.

Finally, “A” players rarely leave organizations where they are part of a cohesive team. Successful teamwork is not about mastering subtle, sophisticated theories but embracing common sense with uncommon discipline and persistence.

Ironically, teams succeed because they are exceedingly human.

By acknowledging the imperfections of their humanity, members of functional teams overcome the natural tendencies that make teamwork so elusive.

With enough time and energy, most teams can work out these answers independently. Our experts will help you move forward faster!

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