Title: The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, A Leadership Fable

Author: Patrick Lencioni

Publisher: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Company

Date of Publication: 2002

Number of pages: 222

Fort Worth PMI Book Club Rating of **The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable**

Excellent-5	Good-4	Average-3	Fair-2	Poor-1
4.6				

Reviewer: Nancy J. Johnson

Book Club Meeting: 2/25/2010

Overview:

Patrick Lencioni presents a five tier approach to improve team dynamics that is simple to understand.

The author posits that there are five behavioral traps that individuals fall into which impede team's ability to function effectively. He starts from the first basic trap which feeds into the next trap stopping at the fifth. The book club meeting agenda had a great summary:

1. Absence of Trust - unwilling to be vulnerable with the team; not trusting the team members to have good intentions
2. Fear of Conflict - seeking artificial harmony over constructive passionate debate.
3. Lack of Commitment - feigning buy-in for group decisions creates ambiguity throughout the organization
4. Avoidance of Accountability - ducking the responsibility to call peers on counterproductive behavior sets low standards
5. Inattention to Results - focusing on personal success, status, and ego before team success.

However, as demonstrated in the story, simple to understand does not mean easy. Kathryn Petersen is hired as Decision Tech's CEO with the expectation that she will pull the once-promising start-up from the brink of being out performed by inferior competitors. She finds a devolving, ineffective executive team. Meetings plug along with no real discussions, conclusions or decisions. How will she be able to pull this seven member team together? Will addressing the five dysfunctions of team behaviors solve everything? Who won't make the cut? Who will leave? Patrick Lencioni leads us through the sometimes harrowing events that drive the team toward the cohesiveness needed to put Decision Tech back in the race.

Starting on page 185, Patrick Lencioni concludes the book with a section called "The Model" which offers a more textbook type section broken out by:

- An Overview of the Model
- Team Assessment

- Understanding and Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions
- A Note About Time: Kathryn's Methods

Book Club Meeting Discussion:

My impression from the book club meeting discussion is that the book is an easy, enjoyable read. Although some of the information was not new to us, we felt we benefited from the reminders as well as the new ideas. Some of the discussion points:

- Kathryn Petersen couldn't have re-built the team without the solid support of the Chairman of the Board.
- Kathryn didn't have to worry if she were fired because she had independent income. How much could or would lack of upper management support affect her decisions if she weren't financially independent?
- How does the current economic climate and lack of job-security affect teams whose members may be concentrating more on building their resume than the over-all success of the team?
- At one point in the book, Kathryn asks "Who is your first team?" If you're on a support team, is it your team or your customers? If you're on a management team, is it you management team or your direct reports?
- It's difficult to encourage people to engage in what might be too touchy-feely for them. Kathryn was very logical and matter-of-fact in her approach which helped allay fears of a group hug.
- The turning point for the team appeared to be when the technical engineer started drawing information on an erasable board and other team members joined him at the board adding their information.
- Kathryn is a high level executive but there are things we can do as team members or team leaders to create pieces of effective team work starting with our own behavior. Without being naïve, each of us can plant seeds of trust, constructive conflict, genuine commitment, team accountability, and team results.
- At one point or another, we all have been or known people like members of Decision Tech's executive team. After all who among us hasn't been fearful of other people motives or fearful to say what we really think?

In Conclusion:

- I think this book is well worth the read. The brief story, 184 pages, generates new thoughts and lively discussion. I came away from our meeting encouraged to at least try some new approaches for myself.
- I think this book is relevant to Project Management because Project Management isn't just about tracking and documenting requirements, risks, schedules, etc. It's also about building and working with and in teams.