

riff:

A distinct variation

Patrick Lencioni is a New-York Times best-selling author of books that help business run more effectively. In this riff, I will explain the big ideas behind his book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, and offer some considerations for our context at Metamora Mennonite Church.

Big Ideas

- “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.”
- Most teams are not as effective as they could be. They are often plagued by dysfunction.
- The 5 dysfunctions Lencioni talks about are...
 1. **Absence of trust**—“This stems from their unwillingness to be vulnerable within the group.” Weaknesses and mistakes are downplayed or hidden.
 2. **Fear of conflict**—“Teams that lack trust are unable to engage in a passionate and unfiltered debate of ideas.”
 3. **Lack of commitment**—“Without having aired their opinions in the course of passionate and open debate, team members rarely, if ever, buy in and commit to decisions, though they may feign agreement during meetings.”
 4. **Avoidance of accountability**—Without real commitment, team members are unwilling to be accountable for actions they didn’t really support anyway. They are also reluctant to call their peers to account as well.
 5. **Inattention to results**— When the dysfunctions 1 through 4 are present, it is easy for people to focus on their own personal needs and pay little attention to the needs and objectives of the whole.
- The five dysfunctions are connected and progressive, beginning with # 1. Without trust, open debate about ideas doesn't occur. Without open debate, people lack commitment. Without commitment, people are not accountable. That manifests as an inattention to results. Nothing gets done.
- Healthy teams...
 1. Trust one another.
 2. Debate ideas openly and honestly to come to a decision.
 3. They commit to decisions and plans of action by the team.
 4. They hold one another accountable.
 5. They focus on the achievement of their collective results.



This summary is taken, in part, from pages 189-190 of *The Five Dysfunction of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni.

Our context

- Church leadership teams at MMC, while distinct from business, have the same need for effective teams.
- We also have the added hurdles of...
 - Time constraints: Lay leaders are volunteers, not full-time employees like a business.
 - Faith considerations: Not hurting others with our words and maintaining peace and community (sometimes at all cost) are deep values—if not spoken, at least in practice.

In Practice

- Two hurdles...
 - First, we need to overcome our fear of conflict. It is OK to have different opinions and share them openly with those who might disagree. That's why we have teams.
 - Second, we need to balance our concern for community with our need to accomplish Jesus' mission. Sometimes people won't like something, even if it is the right thing to do. It was that way for Jesus. He stayed focused on his mission (even when that meant people walked away—see John 6:61-68) It is that way for us, too.
- Our advantage...
 - We can leverage the best of what it means to follow Jesus in order to have healthy teams. This includes...
 - **Trusting one another** in light of our shared faith and commitment to Jesus and His church.
 - **Speaking the truth in love.** Differing ideas do not have to mean broken relationships. We can speak the truth, with love and sensitivity—no need to be harsh, judgmental or result to personal attacks.
 - **Letting our “yes” be “yes” and our “no” be “no”.** As followers of Jesus we are called to complete honesty and transparency. This fuels the open and honest debate of ideas. It also calls for integrity in the commitments made in team meetings.
 - Holding one another **accountable** is bigger than team decisions, it is a matter of integrity as followers of Jesus.
 - The **mission** of Jesus through the church is the most important mission in the world. What we are called to accomplish has eternal significance. If we lose sight of that, we are no longer a church the way Jesus intended.
 - Don't forget the Holy Spirit.
 - This is last, but not least. In this case the last is first. The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and in the life of the church to equip and empower us to accomplish our purpose.

This RIFF is by Michael Danner.

Add your RIFF! Read *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and share your insights.