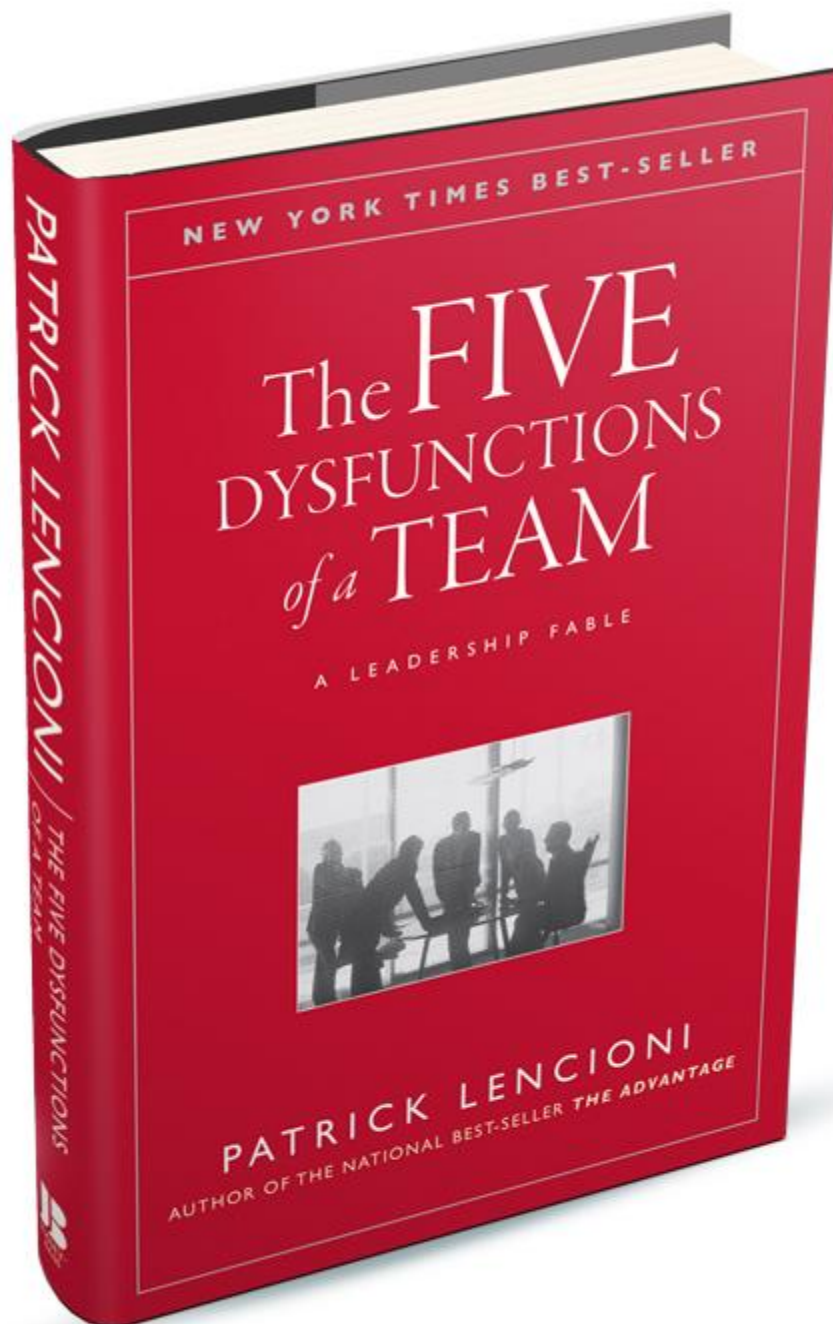


# Five Dysfunctions of a Team Summary

*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni



### Summary of Five Dysfunctions of a Team

*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* is the fictional story of a new CEO and the team she is tasked to lead. Written by Patrick Lencioni, this *New York Times* bestseller takes the reader through a series of issues that CEO Kathryn Peterson encounters as she tries to lead her new team. Many business leaders have praised this leadership fable because it provides a solution to a problem most individuals encounter at some point: how to make dysfunctional teams work better together. The story introduces a new model for team work, the 5 Dysfunctions of a Team Model, which real-life teams can use to understand their own issues and how to overcome them in order to work better together.

### Five Dysfunctions of a Team Model

While the *Five Dysfunctions of a Team* is an interesting story, the popularity of the book is due to the simple and accessible model of teamwork that it introduces. Represented as a Pyramid, Lencioni's main character, Kathryn, uses the model to help her own team. However, this model can also be used to help real teams to understand how to work more cohesively.



The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team™ Model

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In this model, teams that excel in 5 main areas are more likely to be high-functioning, cohesive teams:

- Trust
- Conflict
- Commitment
- Accountability
- Results

To begin, teams learn that each step in this pyramid model builds an important foundation for the next step.

Therefore, if teams can't learn how to *Trust* one another, they won't be able to effectively move on to the next step: learning how to engage in constructive *Conflict*.

Many trainers and organizations have used this model to understand their own team Dynamics. Fortunately, this model is now an assessment called the Five Behaviors of a Team. Combined with [Everything DiSC](#), it is now a comprehensive training program that organizations can use to help dysfunctional overcome their challenges. Additionally, it offers a [Personal Development](#) training on teamwork.

### 5 Dysfunctions of a Team Main Characters

In order of appearance:

Kathryn Petersen – Recently hired CEO of DecisionTech, Inc.

Jeff Shanley – Cofounder and Former CEO of DecisionTech.

DecisionTech, Inc. Chairman of the Board

Michele “Mikey” Bebe – Head of Marketing

Martin Gilmore – Cofounder of DecisionTech, Inc.

JR Rawlins – Head of Sales

Carlos Amador – Head of Customer Support

Jan Mersino – Chief Financial Officer

Nick Farrell – Chief Operating Officer

### 5 Dysfunctions of a Team Summary

Kathryn is a seasoned executive who takes over a young Silicon Valley company called DecisionTech, Inc. The company once was thought of as the next great organization to emerge from Silicon Valley. However, the company starts to experience issues. Deadlines are missed and key executives and employees leave the company.

DecisionTech's Chairman of the Board personally sought out Kathryn for this position. They only know each other socially, and Kathryn was surprised that he wanted her to lead this company. He convinced her that she was perfect because he saw that she was great at building teams.

However, Kathryn seems destined to fail in her new role. She is older than most of the Executives she is tasked to lead, and she is coming out of retirement. Furthermore, to the surprise of her team, she was formerly an executive that lead an automobile manufacturing plant. Her lack of technology experience seems mismatched against the team she is supposed to lead.

These experiences might not seem bad at all, but, in Silicon Valley, she doesn't look like a great fit.



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Oh, and she is also now the boss of the two co-founders of the company (Awkward!). To the astonishment of her team, Kathryn takes the first few weeks to simply observe the dynamics of her team. She hardly speaks during meetings. Even stranger, she allows Jeff, the former leader, to keep leading meetings.

### Kathryn takes charge - the offsite

Kathryn tells the team that they are going to start a series of two-day executive retreats. The team was surprised to learn that they shouldn't prepare anything for the retreat; Kathryn had her own agenda. Before the offsite, Kathryn and Martin butt heads. Martin, determined to make a sale, schedules a meeting with a client on the date of the offsite. Kathryn, takes charge and tells Martin he will have to reschedule. This upsets Jeff and the Chairman. The Chairman calls Kathryn to reconsider her decision. Kathryn stands up to the Chairman. She explains that a single sale won't affect the Company's overall future. However, a broken team will further the company's demise. Kathryn believes certain members of her team will end up leaving after the retreat.

### Lack of Trust: The First Dysfunction of a Team



Kathryn and Martin's issue prior to the retreat foreshadows the first dysfunction: trust. Kathryn kicks off the retreat by explaining that she feels the team is quite dysfunctional. She draws a pyramid on a whiteboard and labels the bottom section *Trust*. Kathryn explains that great teams can't exist without trust. To trust each other, the team must know details about each other that isn't revealed in daily work situations.

While Kathryn is speaking, it's hard to not notice Martin typing away on his computer. To the surprise of the group, Kathryn tells Martin to put away his computer. To further the surprise of the group, Martin obliges.

Kathryn tells the team they must share their 'personal histories' – things that the group wouldn't have known about each other. The activity only takes 45 minutes and the group starts to form a bond that wasn't there before.

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However, this bond quietly starts to fade as they dig into their personal behaviors. Using behavioral tools like [Everything DiSC](#), the group started to understand each others personalities and how the play into their work.

Mikey, opens herself up to criticism from the group by rolling her eyes at a discussion and feigning ignorance that she did it. Furthermore, she derails the whole process by telling the group she feels it's a waste of time while their competitors are probably currently working to gain market share.

Martin, to the surprise of the group, disagrees with Mikey. Mikey doesn't participate further in the discussion, and Kathryn believes that she won't be able to build trust with the group.

### Not just trust.. Vulnerability-based Trust

The next day, the group continues to review trust. Kathryn explains that the type of trust the team needs is *vulnerability-based trust*. To demonstrate if a group actually has trust, Kathryn writes on the board 'invulnerability' to contrast what a group without trust looks like.

She then asks the team to provide their individual strength and weakness. Everyone in the group provides deep answers. They open themselves up to what they feel are their weaknesses. Everyone, except for Mikey. While the group is bonding together, it seems Mikey is slowly being left on the outside.

### Individual Results: The Final Dysfunction of a Team

Kathryn changes pace and tells the group that they now need to spend some time understanding what they are working towards: ***the team's goals***.

Kathryn explains that individual results don't matter if they don't promote the team's goals. In fact, they can harm the team if too much emphasis is placed on individual results. Kathryn writes the word *Results* at the top of the pyramid. She also writes '*Status and Ego*' to show the contrast to Results. Kathryn provides the metaphor of a basketball team. She tells the story of her husband, who coaches high school. His team had a player that was far superior than the rest of the team skill-wise. However, he didn't share the same priorities as the team. He was happy when his team lost, but he scored the most points. He was disappointed when the team won, but he didn't score the most. Kathryn's husband benched the player, and the player eventually quit the team.

Kathryn explains that her job is to create a team, not shepherd the careers of individual employees. The team starts to collectively feel that Mikey will be the person who is cut from their team.

### Goals: the scoreboard of Results

Kathryn breaks the group into pairs and asks them to come back with specific goals for how they can measure the team and the company's results. The group identifies 7 primary categories.

However, the group remarks that these 'new' categories are very similar to what the group was already measuring before Kathryn became CEO. Martin and JR comment that these new metrics haven't worked for them to drive revenue.

Like clockwork, the team defends their individual department successes and protect their 'egos'.



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Kathryn explains that, as a group, they must work towards these goals rather than the individual goals of the department. Furthermore, they must be willing to speak up about things that they see – they can't say things that they know the other person wants to hear.

Kathryn moves to explain the last three parts of the pyramid in an effort to further explain why the group is unable to reach their goals and to achieve collective results.

### Lack of Conflict: The Second Dysfunction

Kathryn goes to the board and writes in the box above *Trust* the words *Conflict* and next to it *Artificial Harmony*.

Kathryn tells the group that trust is needed for a team so they can engage in conflict. Kathryn explains that the group currently has tension without engaging in constructive and ideological conflict. Martin sarcastically, asks how fighting more often will help the team.

Surprisingly, Carlos brings up a topic that the group has avoided engaging in conflict about; whether they should outsource IT. Martin understands, and wants to learn all of the parts of the model.

### Lack of Commitment: The Third Dysfunction

Kathryn is un-phased by the lack of understanding of commitment.

Kathryn explains that commitment isn't about consensus. It's about buy-in and allowing everyone to explain their point of view during conflict. The team, understanding how commitment builds on conflict which builds on trust needs to now know the last dysfunction.

Kathryn is happy to oblige

### Lack of Accountability: The Fourth Dysfunction

Once the group is committed, they must hold each other accountable. This type of accountability is primarily behavioral.

Martin recognizes that Kathryn did this to him at the beginning of the offsite by telling him to turn off his computer. Kathryn explains that it's hardest when you have to do it with someone who you view as your peer. She digs deeper and says that it's impossible to hold each other accountable if you don't have buy-in (commitment).

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### Getting Started - Conflict



Kathryn encourages the team to now apply the model to the part of their work everyone dreads; meetings.

To make her point she asks if the group would prefer to go to the movies or attend a meeting. Her team can't believe that she has to ask that question, why would anyone want to go to a meeting?

Kathryn explains that meetings shouldn't be tame – they should be interesting. She takes her metaphor a step further and explains that meetings should be more interesting than movies because they are *interactive*. Furthermore, movies have no real impact on our lives. Kathryn makes a bold statement that if there is nothing worth debating in the meeting, they shouldn't have the meeting.

To prove her point, she tasks them to pick one overarching goal that they must accomplish by the end of the year. The team, reluctant at first jumps into the discussion. They actually debate each other. Everyone in the group at some point picks up a marker and goes to the white board to make a statement. In the end, they actually agree on a goal – 18 new customers by the end of the year. Unfortunately, the group, while pleased with the results, want to stop the future scheduled offsites. Kathryn puts her foot down. She pushes back and explains that what the group needs to keep working on is how to be a team and they aren't there yet.

Kathryn expects things to get worse before they get better.



Lack of Results: The Fifth Dysfunction: Will the team achieve GROUP Results?



The week after the group offsite, Nick, the COO, approaches the group with an opportunity to purchase a competing company.

In the meeting, the group is unsure about purchasing another company. Nick, feeling handcuffed on this opportunity, insults both Kathryn and Mikey complaining that they can't offer insight into what he is trying to do. Kathryn stops the meeting and talks with Nick one on one. She confronts Nick about his behavior and why he wants them to buy this other company.

Nick explains that doesn't feel like he is meeting *his* goals when he joined the company. Buying this company makes him feel like *he* is achieving something. Kathryn asks him if his goals are aligned with the group goals – which Nick admits that he has been pursuing his own goals.

Nick comes to the group later that day to explain that the company acquisition was more about him reaching his personal goals and it might not be in the best interest of the company to make the acquisition.

It is an unusual moment for the team because it's the first time anyone has put the group first. To add to the oddity of the moment, Kathryn tells the group that JR quit. His reason was that he couldn't stand the offsite and he accepted a lower position at a competing company.

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In this moment, it seems like the group might agree with JR. Fortunately, Martin is the one that pulls the group together. He believes JR wasn't able to actual sell their products, and used Kathryn and the team building as an excuse to leave.

With JR gone, Nick now has something to work on at the company, and the group seems to be more cohesive in this moment, and back to working towards their group goals.

### Goals of the company or goals of the department?

Before the second offsite meeting is about to take place, an IT person comments about the offsite and how he would love to be a fly on the wall to hear the whole executive team talk about their behaviors. Kathryn is surprised to learn that other employees know about the offsite, but she is glad that her team is telling their direct reports about them.

At the second off-site, Kathryn asks the group which team they consider their primary team. "Is it our team, or your department's team?" She asks.

Through this question the group realizes that they are still primarily focused on their department's goals over the Executive team's goals. The group starts to finally converse about a looming issue that has plagued them; the strategy of the company.

The issue at hand was how the company should use their resources – a majority was going towards engineering. Martin was especially defensive, and recognized that his defensiveness could come out showcasing that he wasn't aligned on defeating the fifth dysfunction; achieving individual results rather than the group results.

For the rest of the afternoon they hammer out a strategy that re-allocates their resources.

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To achieve results, they must hold each other accountable



During the discussion, the group finds out that Carlos didn't finish a project that was vital for the conversation.

Jumping on the opportunity, Kathryn calls out Carlos for his behavior. The whole group really likes Carlos because he is so supportive with everyone. Kathryn explains that she is using him as an example, but that they all need to call each other out if someone is doing their part on the team.

The team is unsure how they should hold themselves accountable, especially when it comes to behavior issues. Mikey's behavior, in particular, has rubbed everyone the wrong way. After this meeting, Kathryn decides to call a break and talk with Mikey one on one.

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During this meeting, Kathryn calls attention to Mikey's behavior, and says that she doesn't believe Mikey should still be on the team. Mikey can't believe Kathryn is firing her; after all, she is great at her job. Mikey finally submits and leaves, and Kathryn tells the team once they all reconvene. The team isn't happy even though they all knew that Mikey was toxic. Kathryn takes time to allow them to talk about the situation. The group wonders 'who is next'.

She explains that she chose to fire Mikey because if she tolerated her behavior, it wouldn't set a good example for the team. After all, they are trying to become a team! She tells them that she has no intentions of anyone else leaving the team.

Teams aren't accountable if they are committed



At the third off-site, Kathryn starts the session in how she has started all of the other ones. She draws the pyramid and writes in the five dysfunctions of a team and asks 'how are we doing?'. The team seems to be doing well. They are engaging in conflict openly. They have built trust. Most of all, they are noisier – they are laughing.

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While Kathryn is pleased with what she sees, she knows that some teams can fall backwards into their old habits.

After the offsite, Kathryn tells the team that DecisionTech, Inc. was approached to be acquired by the same company that they were considering buying a few months prior.

Everyone on the team would stand to make a good bit of money if they sold, and the board is allowing the team to make the final decision. The board is leaving the decision up to Kathryn's team to see if they are committed to sticking it out.

For a moment, it seems like the group is going to actually discuss being purchased, but that moment quickly fades.

The group gets back to working on their goals and solving problems, and the book ends a few years in the future with DecisionTech, Inc. being tied for first in the market.

