This leader’s guide is intended for personal reflection and to help facilitate a group discussion. Take a moment to watch the video and read over the guide before your meeting and be prepared with some personal examples to help encourage discussion. Before you meet, print out or email a copy of the two-page handouts to all those who will attend the meeting.

SESSION ONE: The Five Dysfunctions

- Open

Teams come in all shapes and sizes, and they are made up of individuals with specific skills and personalities. Even more, teams are a crucial component of an organization with the potential to create great dysfunction or a profitable foundation for both product and people. This 2-part video series with Patrick Lencioni will provide the keys to understanding where teams struggle most and offer tools for navigating those struggles in a positive manner.

In session one, Patrick, New York Times best-selling author of The Five Dysfunctions of a Team and The Ideal Team Player, and founder of the Table Group, explains the five dysfunctions that consistently challenge team unity within an organization.

- View

Watch Session One: The Five Dysfunctions

- Review

Without good teamwork, an organization will face confusion, conflict among the ranks, and unclear vision. But these days, the over-discussed idea of teamwork has begun to lose any clear sense of meaning. How would you define the concept of teamwork? In what ways did your thoughts change after hearing Patrick’s explanation?

Patrick described teamwork as both a strategic choice and a difficult practice. It takes long-term commitment to cultivate it within a group of people. What strategies do you have in place to encourage teamwork among your people? How well do your people work together as a team currently?

If teamwork is a struggle in your organization, what might be some of the reasons driving that challenge? What might need to change for teamwork to become successful?

- Explore the Dysfunctions Further

Absence of Trust

In Patrick’s model, the dysfunctions build on one another, but the foundation for them all is an absence of trust—specifically, “vulnerability-based trust,” which includes a level of emotional depth in team relationships. Why do you think this kind of trust is so foundational to teamwork? How have you seen its absence affect the culture of a team?
Patrick listed a number of symptomatic behaviors teams tend to show when they lack vulnerability-based trust. *Which of them resonated most with you? Why?*

Creating a culture of trust begins at the top. If leaders don’t pursue vulnerability-based trust themselves, their people aren’t likely to either. *At the moment, how do you seek to model trust for your team? In what ways could you improve your efforts?*

**Fear of Conflict**

Trust creates a foundation for reliable relationships. Without it, people will avoid conflict with one another, which can be devastating to the vision and mission of an organization. *How does productive conflict strengthen a workplace?*

As Patrick pointed out, productive conflict is the collective pursuit of truth. When a team has vulnerability-based trust, they are willing to concede when others have better ideas and advocate for them. *What does conflict look like in your team’s dynamic? As the leader, do you offer an example of what productive conflict looks like? Why or why not?*

*How have you experienced unhealthy conflict in a team environment? How did it affect the team? What factors fueled the unhealthy conflict?*

**Lack of Commitment**

The next layer of dysfunction created by an absence of trust and the fear of conflict is a lack of commitment to the decisions made in an organization. People need to be invested in ideas, even if they disagree with them. *How strong is the commitment level of your team? In what ways could it be improved?*

*What are some of the practical consequences of a team that lacks commitment?*

Patrick clarified that commitment is not the same thing as consensus. In fact, he said he believes that looking for consensus is a bad idea. *Why could a focus on consensus be mistaken for the value Patrick describes as commitment? What would you say is the difference between the two? Why is it important? What might commitment look like for your team?*

**Avoidance of Accountability**

To ensure goals are met, accountability is a crucial piece of any organization. Patrick made it clear that team leaders are the ones who set the standards of accountability. *How do you keep your team accountable to deliverable goals? How could you improve in this skill?*

According to Patrick, what is the difference between conflict and accountability?

A strong model of accountability in leadership can translate to the team so that they each hold one another accountable to their responsibilities. *What are the advantages for a team when each person is committed to keeping one another accountable to their tasks? Where does your team need to grow in this regard?*

**Inattention to Results**

It may seem like common sense, but teams suffer when members focus on individual results instead of the group's results. When this happens, it harms the organization because of a lack of commitment to the common good. *How well does your team focus on collective results? What are some of the obstacles that stand in the way?*

*How do you leverage your leadership to encourage attention to collective results?*

Patrick explained his Team Number One concept, which applies to those of us who sit on multiple teams at a time. In the end, he explained that it’s more important to prioritize the team you’re a member of rather than the team you manage. *How did you respond to his explanation of this concept? How does his advice impact your current leadership priorities?*
Apply What You’ve Learned

Select an activity from the list below to begin applying the lessons of this session to your organization.

**Memorize:** Commit to memory the five dysfunctions of a team. Create a simple description of each in your own words to help you recognize them in the future.

**Write it Down:** Set aside some time to consider and take note of the top three behaviors within your team that could lead to dysfunction. Under each, list some ways you can help encourage growth in those areas.

**Interact:** Reach out to a leader you know who has cultivated a kind of team management that deals well with dysfunction. Schedule some time with him or her to learn how you could better interact with your own team.

**Read:** If you have not already done so, read “The Fable” portion of Patrick Lencioni’s, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and pages 187–190 to further develop your understanding of the primary dysfunctions threatening the success of teams.

**Act Differently:** Consider which of the five dysfunctions has the most potential to surface in your life. Be intentional about confronting that area for the sake of personal growth in the way you relate to your team.
SESSION TWO: Case Study and Q&A with Patrick Lencioni

- Open

In the last session, Patrick Lencioni explained the five dysfunctions that threaten to derail the success of a team. In this session, he will focus on how leaders can identify their team’s dysfunctions and provide practical tips for overcoming each to create positive momentum for a team.

- View

Watch Session Two: Case Study and Q&A with Patrick Lencioni

- Review

No team is perfect. To one degree or another, they will all have dysfunction, but the way those dysfunctions are managed makes all the difference. Having studied each of the five dysfunctions, which one or ones appears in your current team?

What steps have you taken to mature your team in that dysfunction? What results have you seen from your efforts?

While the dysfunctions primarily describe team interactions, those interactions start at the level of the individual. When a team member is unwilling to engage in a way that develops trust, accountability, and so on, the group will suffer. Of the five dysfunctions, which best describes the area where you need to grow personally? In what ways can you begin that process this week? Who can you invite into your development for support?

- Explore the Dysfunctions Further

Each of the five dysfunctions interrelates with the others. They find their foundation in vulnerability-based trust. When it is missing, teams are unable to engage in productive conflict, commit to decisions, hold each other accountable, and focus on their collective results. How well do the members of your team demonstrate trust in one another? What are some factors that encourage deeper trust? What obstacles stand in the way?

What has been your previous experience with a lack of trust within a team? How did you respond to it personally? What impact did your actions have as a result?

In the real-life story, we saw how simple applications from The Five Dysfunctions of a Team changed the environment of Southwest Airlines. Through a variety of team exercises, they created a culture of low ego and high trust, which is the foundation of a strong team. Which of the exercises Patrick mentioned could you apply to your team to begin building a similar culture? How could you begin that process in the coming weeks?
When it comes to the size of a team, Patrick explained that the best teams are those made up of between three to seven people. **How big is your team? In light of Patrick’s advice, should anything change about the size of your team? Why or why not?**

What experience have you had with virtual teams? What have you learned that will help you create trust with others in a virtual environment going forward?

Though it may have come as a surprise, Patrick explained how generational, gender, and cultural differences play a smaller role than we think in terms of team dynamics. **How did his comments strike you? In what ways did they cause you to think differently about those differences among the members of your team?**

As we've already seen, productive conflict is an important part of effective teams. Because of that, teams need to be intentional about not allowing their personal differences to develop behavioral patterns that avoid conflict. **Considering Patrick’s comments, how could you practically interact with more boldness toward those team members who are different than you?**

As a result of this study, how could you begin to integrate the information you have learned into your own practices? What will you do differently to create a team environment that overcomes dysfunction?

**Apply What You’ve Learned**

Select an activity from the list below to begin applying the lessons of this session to your organization.

**Memorize:** Commit to memory the links between the dysfunctions. Remembering how they connect to one another will help you recognize potential dysfunction earlier than you might have previously.

**Write it Down:** Of the five dysfunctions, note the one that is most likely to appear in your interactions with your team. Underneath, write down three practical lifestyle changes you can make to pursue growth in that area.

**Interact:** Practice building vulnerability-based trust with your fellow team members by sharing with them the areas where you are pursuing professional growth. Invite them into that process for personal accountability.

**Read:** Read pages 191–222 in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and select at least two practical changes you could make that would help you embed a healthier team culture into your organization.

**Act Differently:** Think about a time when you experienced dysfunction on a team and reacted to it poorly. Consider ways in which you could have responded in a more positive manner. Resolve to use your experience to address dysfunction better in the future.