SESSION ONE: What Is An Ideal Team Player?

Open

Building a great team is a complex endeavor. It’s not as simple as collecting the right skill sets—the human element is actually a more critical factor in long-term performance. This 2-part video series shows you how to put the right people together to achieve your goals every time.

In session one, Patrick Lencioni, New York Times best-selling author of The Ideal Team Player and founder of The Table Group reveals the three indispensable virtues that make some people better team players than others.

View

Watch Session One: What Is An Ideal Team Player?

Review

What makes an ideal team player? Your answer will determine the kinds of people you look for as well as the types of individuals you surround yourself with. Since team building serves as a crucial foundation for the success of an organization, Patrick shared three critical virtues to seek out when arranging a team. Without individuals committed to one another and their collective work, dysfunction and frustration are inevitable. What qualities do you consider indispensable in a team member? Why are they important to you?

Patrick narrowed our focus to three virtues that indicate an ideal team player—humility, hunger, and smarts. However, if one of them is absent in a pronounced way it can lead to problems among the ranks. Have you had previous experience with difficult or struggling team members? Which of the three virtues were absent? How did it affect team morale as a result?

Would you consider your current team a success? Why? If your team is struggling, what are some of the factors causing the breakdown?

Explore the Principles Further

Humble

Patrick said the first and most important trait in an ideal team player is humility. A humble person works for the good of the team, shares credit for successes, and responds well to criticism. In what ways do you demonstrate humility? Where is there room for you to grow in this virtue? How could you invite your team to participate in your growth?
Because humble people care more about the good of their team, they do not bristle at receiving criticism in their work. Instead, they see it as an opportunity to grow. In what ways do your team members demonstrate humility? How do they respond to criticism? What does their response indicate about their levels of humility?

Patrick pointed out an often-overlooked way in which people reveal their lack of humility—their refusal to acknowledge and embrace the gifts they have been given. How does downplaying personal strengths indicate a lack of personal humility? In what ways does your team recognize their strengths and weaknesses? What kind of effect does this have on team morale?

Hungry

The second trait Patrick listed is hunger—a strong work ethic and the willingness to take initiative. What are the benefits of hunger for a team? How does it motivate the work of both management and other team members?

In what ways does your team demonstrate hunger? To what extent do your team members have a drive to improve themselves and their other teammates? What obstacles threaten their hunger?

Without balance, too much hunger can lead to failure in other areas, like those of relationships with friends and family. What are some ways your team is prone to imbalance? What impact does imbalanced hunger have on your people? How can you use your influence to encourage wise priorities?

Smart

The final core virtue of an ideal team player is that of being interpersonally smart. Patrick said that the smart person has good intuition about people, listens well, and knows how to relate to others. Where does your team measure up on people smarts? How well do they treat each other? What are some potential areas for growth?

How well do your team members listen? In what ways do they show an active interest in one another? Whether good or bad, how do these qualities contribute to the morale of your team?

Patrick noted the similarity between people smarts and emotional intelligence. It has to do with interpersonal skills. As a leader, how do you go about observing smarts in your people? What are some indicators that help you measure the strengths and weaknesses of this virtue among your team members?

The Categories

No one has the perfect balance of humble, hungry, and smart. Even the ideal team player will have greater skill in one trait over the others. Trouble results when a team member lacks one of Patrick’s highlighted virtues in a significant way. He offered six examples of people lacking in one or more of the three characteristics:

1. The Pawn—Humble, but lacking hunger and smarts. They are easily manipulated and have little impact on the overall performance of a team.
2. The Bulldozer—Hungry, but lacking humility and smarts. These people are highly driven, focused on their interests, and care little for how their actions and words affect others.
3. The Charmer—Smart, but lacking humility and hunger. They possess desirable social skills, but lack genuine concern for the long-term well-being of their team members.
4. The Accidental Mess-Maker—Humble and hungry, but not smart. They care about the team and share credit for success, but lack social understanding.
5. The Lovable Slacker—Humble and smart, but not hungry. These people genuinely care about their team members and have little interest in undeserved praise. However, they lack a significant drive to contribute in terms of their work.
6. The Skillful Politician—Hungry and smart, but not humble. Patrick described this individual as a cleverly ambitious and committed worker, but only to the degree that he or she benefits personally. Their smarts often mask their absence of humility.

Which of the categories stood out to you the most? Why?
Which of the categories apply to you or individual members of your team? In what ways do their weaknesses affect your team’s dynamic?

In the real-life story, Barry shared some of the changes he made with his company to revitalize the quality of his employees, one of them being the focus of his interview process. What process do you have for identifying humble, hungry, and smart people? How do you discern these qualities in a potential team member?

By way of warning, Patrick cautioned against using the various categories in a flippant manner. They’re not labels for people. Doing so may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy or it may define a situational trait as characteristic, which leads to greater harm. How can you practice wisdom with these categories? What can you do to ensure that you use them for the sake of developing your people rather than simply labeling them?

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 three traits of an ideal team player. In addition, in your own words, develop a description for each that you can easily remember.

Write it Down: As you go about your week, take note of the ways in which you see these traits positively embodied by your team members. Briefly note these instances and reflect on the ways your team succeeds together.

Interact: Single out a business leader who exhibits the three traits of an ideal team player and successfully passes them along to his or her people. Make a connection with this leader to gain greater insight into how you could better leverage your leadership to develop your team.

Read: If you have not already done so, read “The Fable” portion of Patrick Lencioni’s, The Ideal Team Player and pages 155-173 to further develop your understanding of the core traits of an ideal team player.

Act Differently: Determine which of the three virtues is your weakest and practice viewing it as an opportunity for personal growth rather than an unchangeable characteristic.
SESSION TWO: Developing and Hiring The Ideal Team Player

- **Open**

  In the last session, Patrick Lencioni outlined the three critical traits of *The Ideal Team Player*. In this session, Patrick will show you how to utilize these evaluation criteria on an ongoing basis in order to pick the stars that will shine brightest together on your team.

- **View**

  Watch Session Two: *Developing and Hiring The Ideal Team Player*

- **Review**

  As you observe weaknesses in yourself or in your team, you have a couple of options—you can either treat them like self-fulfilling labels or as opportunities for development. Opting for the latter is the only way towards true growth, but it begins with understanding effective methods for development as well as determining the areas of greatest weakness. Of the three traits Patrick described, which would you consider your strength? Which is your weakest? How does each influence the effectiveness of your team?

  Helping others develop personally is a challenging and vulnerable process. It means creating an environment of personal accountability in which the team understands individual weaknesses and works to coach one another towards growth. In what ways would your leadership change if you viewed the weaknesses of your team as opportunities rather than liabilities? How would doing so change the way you approach your people?

  How could you invite your team to participate in your personal development? In what ways could they help you grow in your areas of weakness?

- **Explore the Principles Further**

  To certain degrees, we all struggle with humility. Patrick noted that one of the most important parts of helping someone develop humility is sharing how you struggle with it. **What are some ways you attempt to demonstrate vulnerability? How could a deeper level of personal vulnerability embolden your team to pursue humility?**

  As Patrick pointed out, hunger requires a nuanced approach. Challenges with hunger may stem from a person's upbringing, outside hobbies, or a lack of genuine care for the well-being of their teammates. One way to challenge those who lack hunger is to connect their work to the overarching mission. **How connected are your people to the mission of the team? How has the mission been communicated to them? What are some of the ways they demonstrate a personal contribution to it?**

  Those who are weak with interpersonal smarts typically are not so by choice. Even more, Patrick said that they tend to be very open to coaching in this area. **For those of your team members who struggle interpersonally, how could you offer them real-time feedback?**
What would it look like to do so in a loving manner?

Patrick noted that an important part of successfully developing team members is a commitment to regular reminders when they are not living up to expectations. When this happens, almost always the person will respond by changing or by opting out of their position. **What do you do to clearly communicate expectations to your team members? How do you acknowledge when change does occur? In what ways could you improve?**

Sometimes, consistent reminders of expectations will cause a team member to recognize that they do not wish to grow in humility, hunger, and smarts and will choose to leave on their own. Though not ideal, Patrick said it is important to allow a team member to opt out with the blessing of the leadership. **What would it look like for you to offer positive guidance to such a decision? What factors might keep you from doing so?**

Patrick unpacked specific questions for identifying opportunities for development in each of the three traits of an ideal player. **How could you utilize the questions to help your team gain a better grasp on where they need to grow? How could “team coaching” serve as a helpful tool for accomplishing such a goal?**

In the real-life story, Jim shared how he does not hire people for what they already know, but for what they can learn, especially as they make mistakes along the way. **What are some indicators that help you gauge whether or not a candidate is teachable? How do you creatively discern them?**

Would you say your team feels the freedom to fail in order to learn from their mistakes? **Why or why not?**

Hiring the ideal team player requires clarity with your expectations as well as creativity throughout the interview process. **What questions can you ask to identify individuals who are humble, hungry, and smart? What changes can you make to your interview process to ensure a candidate possesses the characteristics you desire in a team member?**

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**Apply What You’ve Learned**

**Memorize:** Select one or two of the statements Patrick shared for determining areas of development in each of the three traits. Commit them to memory to discern when you or your team begins to struggle in one of the expected virtues.

**Write it Down:** Consider which of the three traits is your weakest and write it down. Describe why you think it is your weakest along with some action steps for how you will seek to grow.

**Interact:** Depending on which of three traits in which your team is weakest, begin implementing the developmental method that will create growth in that area. Be patient with the process and invite your team to help you in your own weaknesses.

**Read:** Read pages 174-215 in *The Ideal Team Player* and consider ways to creatively adjust your interview process to find candidates that embody the qualities you desire.

**Act Differently:** Work at viewing failure differently. Rather than seeing it solely as a liability to your mission, use times of failure as a teaching lesson by giving your team the freedom to learn from their mistakes.