

Notes from training
“The Five Dysfunctions of a Team”
March 12, 2008
By Peggy Hayes

The book dealt with the team of a fictional software company, and their inability to work as a team. A team building specialist, Kathryn, was hired to find out why this company could not exceed the market placement of their closest competitor. They had the best people in the field occupying the top executive slots on the team, yet they could not function as a team. Kathryn observed the team and then scheduled them for a weekend retreat. At this retreat, she took them through the five dysfunctions of a team, and taught them how to build a team on the foundation of trust. She taught them to get past their own insecurities, how to hold, and be held, accountable for results, how to commit to a team objective, and how to put their individual egos aside for the good of the team.

The following are notes from the class:

1. An absence of trust comes from an unwillingness to appear human, and thus fallible.
2. Fear of conflict comes from not feeling like you can trust the people in your team not to hold against you the things that you say during debates
3. Lack of commitment comes when all the members of your team have not been given an opportunity to way in on the project. Even if they were not originally for it, you should still be able to get “Buy-In” from each member.
4. When you avoid holding your team accountable for both their behavior and their assigned tasks, you damage your believability with them. Peer to Peer accountability (Peer Pressure) is a very powerful tool for a team leader.
5. When team members put their own egos ahead of the good of the team, the result is a lack of attention to results. Each person is too busy looking out for themselves to build the team.

The class used a Team Assessment Process sheet to gather scores from their teams. These scores were then grouped under the appropriate dysfunction as follows:

1	Absence of Trust	Dysfunction #1	Statements # 4, 6, & 12
2	Fear of Conflict	Dysfunction #2	Statements # 1, 7, & 10
3	Lack of Commitment	Dysfunction #3	Statements # 3, 8, & 13
4	Avoidance of Accountability	Dysfunction #4	Statements # 2, 11, & 14
5	Inattention to Results	Dysfunction #5	Statements # 5, 9, & 15

We added up the individual scores, and then averaged them. These scores were then entered into one of the five dysfunctions and added up. Depending on the total of the score, your team may or may not need to work on that particular dysfunction.

Kay suggested that we review our own assessment as the leader against the scores of our teams. Were they similar, or was there a large discrepancy?

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Ten Ideas for Handling Criticism:

1. Try not to be angry when it is offered
2. Listen intently to the criticism. Do not interrupt.
3. Pity inept criticizers. Focus on the intent of the message and not the content. Try to find the message.
4. Ask for examples of the criticisms. Request specifics.
5. After listening, then share your perceptions of the situation. Correct any inaccuracies of the statements made in the criticism.
6. Don't accuse the criticizer of being unfair.
7. You may get the opportunity to summarize the disagreement. Use this chance to compare the opposing viewpoints.
8. This is an opportunity for you to state your feelings on the subject.
9. Thank your criticizer for being honest with you and for taking the time to help you improve.
10. Take the criticism to heart. If you intend to make changes for improvement, follow through. Be sure your criticizer is aware of the changes when they are made.

Remember, negative input needs to be taken in context. If the majority of your feed-back is positive, then keep that in mind when you have an extremely negative criticism. Examine the input, and decide whether it is valid. Never discount it just because you don't agree with it, or it hurts your feelings. The intent of the remark might really have been meant to be helpful.

When you become a supervisor, you have the opportunity to study the team you've assembled, or inherited. It is part of your role as leader to know your team. Understand their communication styles. Learn their strengths and weaknesses and decide how best to assist them. Build trust with your team, and the rest will be easier. Be sure you validate the conflicts, do not ignore or worse discourage them. Keep them constructive.

Learn to use “Emotional Intelligence” when dealing with sensitive subjects. (Kay will be conducting a workshop on this subject sometime in the future)

One of the biggest mistakes a leader can make is putting the interests of the team he/she leads ahead of the organizations overall team. The goal of the individual team should always be the greater strength of the organization as a team. When you have a team you lead and participation in an organizational team, your decisions should always be made based on how the two will best support one another.

You must truly believe in your message if you expect buy-in from your team. Most people don't really care if their idea is the selected one as long as they feel that their idea was listened to and got the consideration it deserved as a possibility.

Some of the distractions to team success are Ego, Shared Fate, Career Development, Money, Acknowledgement of Personal Needs, and Your Department.

Teams should not be made up of more than 15 people if at all possible. A team leader needs to know when to remove a team member for the overall well-being of the team. If they are a constant distraction and roadblock to team success, then it is much better to cut them from the team than to allow them to continue on their destructive path. As Kathryn said in the book, “Sometimes you have to re-break a leg to make it heal properly”. It hurts, but it must be done, and eventually there are positive results.

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Advocacy:

This is a statement of ideas & opinions. This is generally the case when a meeting is going to be limited in time. Each person has their own ideas and opinions that they want to impart to the rest of the team. The first person will do so, and then the next, and next, and so on. Each person is dealing with a whole new set of ideas and no one expanding on what was said before them. This is one of the reasons it is important to keep teams small, and to have a clear purpose defined before the meeting takes place.

Inquiry:

This is asking questions for clarity and understanding. When there is a need for further expansion on a know subject.

Obstacles to avoid when team building:

- The leader isn't truly committed to building a team
- Team members are holding back
- Someone is dominating the session
- A top performer isn't interested in or committed to the team building process

