

BOOK REVIEW: THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM

Cooperation and teamwork breed success

By John Caldwell
Voice staff writer

"Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare," is how Patrick Lencioni introduces his NY Times best-seller, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.

Mr. Lencioni is the president of The Tabletop, a management consulting firm whose clientele include At&t, Fedex and Westpoint. Mr. Lencioni has written six books.

Regardless of what brings you to campus on a regular basis, you make up part of a team we could call "Team FSU." Certainly many relate to FSU being a family. But family members must recognize the role teamwork plays in their effort to be effective in all matters concerning that family and their established desires and goals.

"Cooperative effort by the members of a group or team to achieve a common goal," is the simple way Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary defines teamwork. And by definition, FSU is made up of small teams, that come together to form larger teams, that ultimately serve the goals of the FSU team, by way of teamwork. As a member of the "Bronco Family," you are a part of that team, deriving benefits for yourself and hopefully, for your teammates.

Whether in the classroom with students in the role of team players and the professor as their team coach, or in the multitude of campus organization and clubs, or in any of the many administrative and support teams that see to the needs of the university family, all can benefit by placing value on teamwork.

All FSU students, staff, and administrators rely on others at some point during the course of their day. Most times those interactions are crucial to productive outcomes to all concerned. Sometimes we don't recognize how our actions, or lack thereof, impact our team(s), for the better and for the worst.

"For all the attention that it has received over the years from scholars, coaches, teachers, and the media, teamwork is as elusive as it has ever been within most organizations. The fact remains that teams, because they are made up of imperfect humans beings, are inherently dysfunctional," writes Mr. Lencioni.

"Like so many other aspects of life, teamwork comes down to mastering a set of behaviors that are at once theoretically uncomplicated, but extremely difficult to put into practice day after day. Success comes only for those groups that overcome the all-too-human behavioral tendencies that corrupt teams and breed dysfunctional politics within them."

"The Fable," and "The Model," are the two sections Mr. Lencioni divides his work into. He first tells the fable of a realistic but fictional organization that he says allows the readers to learn more effectively by allowing readers to relate to the characters. In "The Model," Mr. Lencioni outlines what he defines as the five dysfunctions of a team in detail, and includes a team assessment with suggested tools to overcome the issues that might be plaguing your team.

In summarizing the dysfunctions, Mr. Lencioni writes that they can be mistakenly interpreted as five distinct issues to be addressed in isolation of the others.

"But in reality they form an interrelated

model, making susceptibility to even one of them potentially lethal for the success of a team." He gives a cursory overview of each dysfunction as follows:

The first dysfunction is absence of trust amongst team members. If team members are not genuinely open with each other about their mistakes and weaknesses, it is impossible to build a foundation of trust.

Absence of trust creates the circumstance for the second dysfunction, fear of conflict. Teams that lack trust are incapable of fully and honestly debating issues as they resort to veiled discussions and guarded comments.

The inability to openly discuss issues leads to a lack of commitment. If team members are unable to fully air their views, it is unlikely that they will be fully committed to the decisions of the group.

Team members will inevitably avoid accountability if are not fully bought into the decisions of the group. How can they stand up and be counted on issues if they were not completely committed to them initially?

Inattention to results occurs when team members put their individual needs (such as ego, career, recognition or reward) or even their division above the collective needs of the team. Failure to hold one another accountable creates an environment where the fifth dysfunction can thrive.

Ray Thomas knows all too well the benefit derived from effective teamwork. The FSU general manager of the student run "Bronco iRadio.com" says he always preferred team oriented sports to individual competitions, during his youth and collegiate days. Mr. Thomas explained that those earlier experiences of teamwork have served him quite

well throughout his career in broadcasting. He described a multiplier effect when individual members recognized and honored the group as a team effort.

"Teamwork is the essential of any activity that brings together more than one person working toward a common goal. You have to put the personal feelings aside along with the ego, and understand what the common goal is, and be focused on that," said Mr. Thomas.

"At the end of the day it's gonna benefit the entire team as long as that person overall in charge of the team is a fair and genuine person, the entire team will be rewarded. It's like that old saying you reap what you so. If we all sow together we will all reap together. The ultimate consequence of teamwork is that we can all dream together for a common goal, and reap the ultimate success. Everyone wants to be successful. When I hear 'team' that's what has been instilled in me from my younger days, from my various coaches over the years."

If you recognize your role as a teammate on at least one the multitude of teams that make up "Team FSU," and wish to see the maximum expression of the inherent potential the "Bronco Family" is imbued with, pick up a copy of Mr. Lencioni book. Relate the work to your team(s), to see if it speaks to any shortcomings, then seek ways to implement those lesson learned as well as share your insight with your teammates.

"I sincerely hope (the book) helps your team overcome its particular dysfunctions so that it can achieve more than individuals could ever imagine doing alone. That, after all, is the real power of teamwork," is how Mr. Lencioni sums up his vision.

Couch Potatoes



Jovian Turnbull

