



Can Your Team Tell Each Other the Truth?

5 behaviors that turn trust into a high-performing team

Trust is an important foundation for a healthy organization. But trust is not the end goal. The real question is: **What does trust allow your team to do?**

Can people disagree? Challenge a bad idea? Make a decision and move forward together? Hold each other accountable? Put the results of the business ahead of protecting themselves or their own area? Patrick Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* offers a practical way to think about that progression. **It begins with trust - but a strong team has to build on it.**

1 Build enough trust to be vulnerable

Lencioni puts **absence of trust** at the foundation of team dysfunction. The deeper issue is vulnerability-based trust. Can I say, **'I made a mistake,' 'I need help,' 'I don't know,' or 'I handled that poorly'** without constantly worrying about how the admission will be used against me? Without that kind of trust, people spend enormous energy protecting themselves. Leaders set the example: if the founder cannot admit mistakes, receive feedback, or acknowledge weaknesses, it is difficult to expect everyone else to do it.

ASK YOURSELF: Can the people on my leadership team openly admit where they are struggling - including to me?

2 Use trust to have the conversations that need to happen

Once people trust each other, they can disagree. Lencioni calls the second dysfunction **fear of conflict**. Healthy teams debate ideas, priorities, performance, resources, strategy, and decisions. That is not the same as personal attacks or disrespect. But sitting silently in a meeting, disagreeing with a decision, and complaining afterward is not healthy either. A team that cannot have difficult conversations is not protecting harmony. It is usually postponing problems.

ASK YOURSELF: Does my team disagree honestly in the room - or agree in the room and disagree afterward?

3 Get to a decision people can actually commit to

The third dysfunction is **lack of commitment**. If people have not had the opportunity to question, challenge, and understand a decision, they may leave without really buying into it. That does not mean everyone gets their way. A strong team can disagree and still say, **'That wasn't the decision I preferred, but I understand it and I will support it.'** The leader's job is to get the important perspectives into the room, make a clear decision, clarify ownership, and then move forward together.

ASK YOURSELF: When we finish an important discussion, does everyone know what we decided, who owns it, and what happens next?



4 Create a team that holds itself accountable

Lencioni's fourth dysfunction is **avoidance of accountability**. In a founder-dependent organization, accountability usually flows one direction: the owner holds everyone accountable. A strong leadership team works differently. Peers can appropriately challenge one another and ask, '**You committed to having that done Friday. What happened?**' That kind of accountability is difficult without trust. The founder still has responsibility for accountability, but should not be the only person willing to address missed commitments or poor performance.

ASK YOURSELF: If one of my managers is not delivering, will the other leaders address it - or wait for me to do it?

5 Make the success of the business more important than individual success

At the top of Lencioni's model is **inattention to results**. People can become focused on their department, status, compensation, being right, looking competent, or protecting their territory. A strong team understands that individual and departmental success ultimately matter because they contribute to the success of the organization. The question changes from '**Is my area winning?**' to '**Are we winning?**'

ASK YOURSELF: When priorities compete, do my leaders protect their own areas - or make decisions based on what is best for the whole business?

Trust Is the Beginning, Not the Destination

Lencioni's model shows how trust becomes operational. Trust makes healthy conflict possible. Healthy conflict creates clarity and commitment. Commitment makes peer accountability possible. Accountability keeps the team focused on shared results.

TRUST	We tell the truth
HEALTHY CONFLICT	We discuss what matters
COMMITMENT	We decide and move forward
ACCOUNTABILITY	We challenge each other
RESULTS	We win together

It is not simply about creating a workplace where people like each other. It is about creating a team capable of addressing difficult things together.

THE TEAM TEST

TRUST - Can we be vulnerable? Can people admit mistakes, weaknesses, uncertainty, and the need for help?

CONFLICT - Can we disagree? Can the team debate important issues openly without making disagreement personal?

COMMITMENT - Can we decide? Do discussions end with clarity about what was decided and who owns what?

ACCOUNTABILITY - Can we challenge each other? Will team members address missed commitments and poor performance with one another?

RESULTS - Are we trying to win together? Does the success of the whole business come before status, departments, and personal agendas?

BUILD WHAT LASTS

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