A group of people, mostly men in business attire, are shown from the chest up. They have their hands raised in a gesture of agreement, participation, or listening. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the text. The overall tone is professional and collaborative.

How to have difficult conversations within your team



Difficult conversations

Sometimes there is the need to have the ‘hard’ conversation with someone. It can be uncomfortable for all involved, but as your business & team grows it is just going to be a fact of life.

Having difficult conversations is crucial because it helps to resolve conflicts, build stronger relationships, and improve team dynamics. Ignoring issues can lead to misunderstandings, resentment, and a lack of trust. Addressing problems directly can prevent small issues from escalating and ensures everyone is aligned and working towards common goals.

Key Points from Patrick Lencioni and The Table Group

Vulnerability-Based

Trust is the foundation of any successful team. Team members need to be comfortable being vulnerable with each other, sharing their mistakes, and asking for help. This openness creates a safe environment where difficult conversations can happen more naturally.

Healthy Conflict

Lencioni advocates for productive conflict, which means engaging in debates around ideas rather than personal attacks. Encouraging team members to express their opinions and challenge each other's ideas leads to better decision-making and innovation.





Key Points from Patrick Lencioni and The Table Group

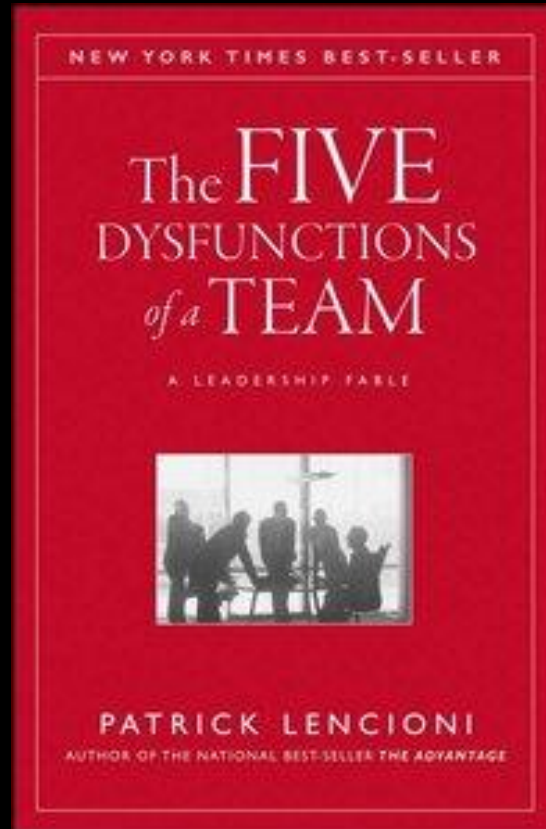
Commitment and Accountability

Clear, open conversations help teams commit to decisions and hold each other accountable. When team members have a voice in the decision-making process, they are more likely to buy into the outcomes and ensure everyone follows through on their commitments.

Focus on Results

By having difficult conversations, teams can stay focused on collective results rather than individual agendas. This focus drives better performance and ensures that the team's efforts are aligned with your goals. Difficult conversations help to keep everyone on track and motivated towards achieving shared objectives.

[Click here for information on the book by Patrick Lencioni, Teamwork : The Five Dysfunctions of a Team](#)





How to have difficult conversations

To have difficult conversations, focus on building trust. Be honest and open, showing vulnerability so others feel safe to share.

Encourage productive conflict by listening actively and addressing issues directly to solve problems together.

Understand that avoidance harms team cohesion. Prioritise the team's goals over individual comfort and hold each other accountable. Emphasise commitment to decisions made, ensuring everyone is on the same page.

Examples of how to open a difficult conversation

Direct Approach: "I need to discuss something important with you that's been on my mind. Can we talk about it now?"

Empathetic Approach: "I understand this might be a tough topic, but it's important for us to address it. Can we have a conversation about it?"

Collaborative Approach: "I value our working relationship, and I think we need to talk about an issue to improve our collaboration. When would be a good time to discuss this?"





Examples of how to open a difficult conversation

Curiosity Approach: "I've noticed something that I think we should talk about. Can we sit down and go over it together?"

Non-Confrontational Approach: "There's a situation I think we need to address to make things better for both of us. Can we chat about it?"

These openings set a respectful and constructive tone for the conversation.

Why You Shouldn't Put Off Having a Difficult Conversation

Putting off a difficult conversation can lead to unresolved issues festering and growing worse over time.

Delays can cause misunderstandings, build resentment, and create a toxic work environment.

Avoidance often results in larger conflicts, decreased trust, and reduced team cohesion.

Addressing problems promptly helps to maintain open communication and prevents minor issues from escalating into major problems.





Benefits to the Team for Having a Difficult Conversation

Having difficult conversations benefits the team by fostering a culture of honesty and transparency.

It enhances trust and respect among team members, as issues are addressed directly and constructively.

Open communication leads to better problem-solving, increased collaboration, and stronger relationships.

Ultimately, this approach improves overall team performance and ensures alignment with your goals.



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