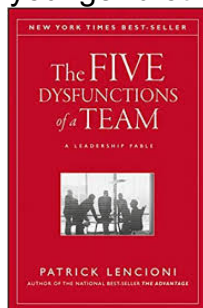


## Your First Team A Concept – A Commitment

Executive teams are usually made up of hands-on managers who have a dual role. The first role is as leader of teams such as Sales, Engineering, Product Management, Consulting, Customer Service, Human Resources, Accounting, Manufacturing, and so on. Each leader invests a majority their time with the team they lead. However, they can become so close to their team and the team's goals that they sometimes forget that they are part of another team - the executive team. Patrick Lencioni, in his book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, describes this team as "first teams." This differentiation, or focus, becomes increasingly critical as organizations become larger, more matrix'd, and of course, highly dispersed.

Pat, in his book, asks us to think of it as If you had siblings when you were younger. You may consider a time when you were playing hide-and-seek outside with your younger brother and sister when they accidently knock over a flower pot while wrestling around. You feel bad for them because it was an accident and do not want to 'tattle' because they are your siblings and fear them getting in trouble. However, loyalty to your parents, the rules, and the family belongings is more important. Your parents are your "first team."



The "first team" is the team where the loyalty of each member is most focused towards. Managers need to be focused on the team they report to - not the people they lead.

At the executive team level - there can be only one priority - the success of the executive team and how it propels the company forward. There can be no competing priorities - no personal agendas - only one healthy and unified focus.

### Signs the Executive Team Is Not Committed to the "first team"

- Managers are overly-defensive of their own teams. You will hear, "My team... My people..." more frequently than necessary.
- The existence of silos. For example, the sales manager only talks about sales during an executive meeting.
- Collective decision-making is minimal. Individual and departmental goals and objectives are a road block to the collective good of the company when it comes to decision-making.
- The existence of animosity between separate teams or departments.
- There are signs of 'mixed messages' when managers cascade messages to the rest of the organization.

## Making your "first team" the Priority

1. **Ask the executive team who they think is their "First Team?"** Most will probably point to those they are closest with - the team they lead. This is a great opportunity to open the discussion about who their first team should be. This is when you move to step 2.
2. **Have the executive team read and discuss the book: *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.** The importance of making the "First Team" priority is greatly outlined by a narrative example in Patrick Lencioni's book. Your team will most likely relate to the example in the book. Their reactions when you introduce who their "first team" is should be similar to those in the book. Having them relate to those in the book will help them feel comfortable about this concept. If you want to leverage the power behind the Five Dysfunctions model, have your team complete a Five Dysfunction's workshop.
3. **Set timelines and expect "turbulence" as management team members realign their priority to the "first team."** Let the executive or management team know that within an agreed upon timeframe, 30 days, for example, the team can expect the first team concept to be in place. The executive team will schedule debriefs and discussions at upcoming staff meetings.
4. **Expect commitment to the first team and encourage team members to call out one another.** There will be an agreement during the workshop as to how to hold each other accountable to the norms and agreements of the first team.
5. Expect your "first team" to need **direction and encouragement**. Together, we will enforce the code. Once commitment to the "first team" is made by the executive team our commitment to each other is to keep a sharp eye on our progress. As we step out of bounds – and we will – we constructively pull each other back into the frame.



The "first team" perspective can be a significant call-to-action and a powerful accelerant for clarity to your team by providing a "due north" in terms of expectations. In companies that have implemented this practice, the results have been quick, and the clarity provided to the balance and results of the company have been energizing.