**Introduction**

Patrick Lencioni, a management consultant and leadership expert, has identified the five dysfunctions of a team. Using his years of experience coaching CEOs, Lencioni determined common behaviors and practices that undermine team and organizational performance, which led to the development of the "Five Dysfunctions" model. Let's review these dysfunctions and strategies for overcoming them by applying agile principles and Scrum practices.

**The five dysfunctions**

Here's a summary of the common roadblocks found in dysfunctional team environments. Lencioni presents these as a pyramid, where each layer builds upon the one below. Together, these challenges undermine effective collaboration and overall team performance.

A pyramid of characteristics with text

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

* **Absence of trust:** Team members' lack of vulnerability prevents them from being open with one another. This distrust—toward each other, processes, culture, and rules—hinders idea-sharing, issue-raising, and seeking help.
* **Fear of conflict:** Without trust, teams avoid conflict, creating an illusion of harmony. This avoidance suppresses critical discussions and leaves issues unresolved.
* **Lack of commitment:** Open dialogue fosters commitment, but its absence leads to ambiguity around priorities and goals. This undermines accountability and clarity of direction.
* **Avoidance of accountability:** Team members need to be committed to holding themselves and others accountable, which can result in a lack of follow-through and effort.
* **Inattention to results:** Teams prioritize personal goals over collective ones, leading to diminished focus and poor overall outcomes.

**Addressing the five dysfunctions in a scrum environment**

To counter the impact of the five dysfunctions, it's essential to understand their connection to Agile principles and Scrum practices. The chart below highlights how Scrum can mitigate these dysfunctions effectively.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Dysfunction** | **Description** | **Agile principle** | **Scrum practice** |
| **Absence of trust** | Team members are not open with one another. | Individuals and interactions over processes and tools | * Kickoff * Daily scrum * Scrum master |
| **Fear of conflict** | Teams are incapable of engaging in effective conversation | Collaboration | * Retrospectives * Backlog refinement * Sprint review |
| **Lack of commitment** | Team members don't buy in or commit | Working software over comprehensive documentation | * Sprint planning * Sprint * Clear user stories |
| **Avoidance of accountability** | Team members do not hold anyone accountable | Responding to change by following a plan | * Sprint Planning * Sprint Goals * Definition of Done |
| **Inattention to results** | Team members put their own needs first | Customer collaboration over contract negotiation | * Sprint reviews * Demos * Backlog refinement |

**Scrum practices to address the five dysfunctions**

**Build trust**

* Foster trust through open communication, starting with the kickoff meeting.
* The Scrum Master maintains processes while the Product Owner builds understanding and commitment to objectives.
* Engage all stakeholders, including the Scrum team, by soliciting and incorporating their input, needs, and ideas.

**Encourage healthy conflict**

* Promote constructive conflict in daily scrums and sprint planning to identify and address issues.
* Manage the backlog effectively by adding, modifying, or removing user stories and features to maximize value for end users and customers.

**Commit to decisions and objectives**

* Effective communication clarifies roles, responsibilities, sprint goals, and tasks.
* Resolve conflicts during meetings (e.g., Kickoff, daily scrums, sprint planning, and reviews) and escalate when necessary.

**Establish accountability**

* Drive accountability through collaboration between the Scrum Master and the Product Owner.
* Team members hold themselves and each other accountable during Scrum events.
* Use the "Definition of Done" to define a completed task, feature, or product.

**Focus on results**

* Deliver value by achieving sprint goals, satisfying stakeholders, and addressing roadblocks promptly.
* Celebrate individual and team successes during daily scrums, retrospectives, and other events.
* Continuously improve team performance through open communication and proactive issue management.

**Summary**

Scrum and Agile practices inherently address the five dysfunctions, leading to high-performing teams.

Teams follow agile processes and principles, while process discipline is ensured by a Scrum Master and value delivery is managed by a Product Owner, which helps teams overcome dysfunctions and achieve optimal collaboration and results