The Five Dysfunctions of a Team Notes

**Introduction**

The Author Patrick Lencioni argues in the introduction that teamwork is what is needed in order for a team, organization, or business to survive and thrive. However, humans are flawed in our understanding, but that doesn’t mean that teamwork is doomed to the same type of fate. Only the group that overcomes their difficulties will in return be successful because of it. This book is set in a fictional organization so that the reader is able to relate to the characters and the struggles that they will face as well as offer concrete applications of what the book offers. There is even material to apply to our own organization or team and a team assessment/tools to overcome any issues as well.

**The Fable**

1. *Luck*

Kathryn Peterson was elected by someone who was a chairman of the board for a company called, DecisionTech, Inc., to become the CEO. After just two years of being in the position, she helped the company become incredibly well known in Silicon Valley.

1. *Part One: Underachievement*

* *Backstory*

DecisionTech is part of the Silicon Valley with the most capable people for the job, an incredible business plan, and many young investors. However, this was two years ago when they first started. The company began to fall on hard times with deadlines being missed, disappointments from management, and key employees left the company. Jeff Shanley, DecisionTech’s thirty-seven-year-old CEO was asked to step down. The 150 employees liked him on a personal level, however they could all agree that he didn’t have the leaderships qualities to move the company. All and all, there was no sense of “community” at DecisionTech. Word spread that DecisionTech was a very unpleasant place to work in Silicon Valley. Three weeks later was when Kathryn was hired to the company.

* Kathryn

The executives knew there were many problems with the Kathryn: she was fifty-seven-years-old, had no high-tech experience, and her career path mostly being in operational roles for low-tech companies. She didn’t seem to fit. She was in the military, had a family, went to school for business, and retired at age fifty-four. On paper, Kathryn didn’t seem like a good fit for the company, however the Chairman insisted that the board would give her a try. Even with all of the reasons not to interview her, the board decided that DecisionTech was in a dire situation. So they decided to give her a chance.

* Rationale

The Chairman has known Kathryn for some time on a personal level. They met when Kathryn’s husband coached the Chairman’s son in high school, where they got to know each other. The Chairman read up on Kathryn and her successful ventures in Bar Area’s automobile manufacturing plant where she rose up quickly with little training. The Chairman offered the position to Kathryn on the sole fact that “she had an amazing gift for building teams.”

* Grumblings

The DecisionTech executives had many doubts about Kathryn; especially after the first two weeks of her working the job. After her first day and interviews with her direct reports, Kathryn spent most of her time walking the halls, chatting with the staff, and attending meetings. She even asked Jeff Shanley, the previous CEO, to continue leading the weekly executive staff meetings, where she only took notes at. Kathryn requested that the executives would take a two-day retreat in the Napa Valley, which they were somewhat reluctant about. They suggested a topic of discussion for the two-day retreat but Kathryn refused, saying that she had her own agenda.

* Observations

From the two weeks of working at DecisionTech Kathryn knew that this was going to be a challenge to fix the company and she didn’t want to let the Chairman down. But she wasn’t going to let a bunch of yuppies make her feel pressured. She believed that her lack in software experience would help her compared to all of her colleagues. Rather her experience in leadership would be sufficient enough to get DecisionTech out of the mess that they are in.

* The Staff

The staff was not referred to as a team, and within meetings no one seemed to argue or resulting in an undeniable tension.

**Jeff – Former CEO, Business Development**

* Contributed a lot to get the company’s initial money and current executives.
* Meetings he created always followed into routine – People hated them
* Nothing got done during his meetings
* Likes Kathryn for taking his old responsibilities

**Mikey – Marketing**

* “Brand Building Genius” – Very well sought after
* Introverted | Doesn’t understand how she comes across to others
* A spectator that doesn’t like to get her hands dirty

**Martin – Chief Technologist**

* Founder/inventor of the company
* Was a real leader for the company when it first started
* Very informed on tech companies and tech in general
* Doesn’t participate & Arrogant – On his computer a lot

**JR – Sales**

* Excellent sales person
* Never follows through with any requests
* Maintains a somewhat good track record with his peers

**Carlos – Customer Support**

* Very quiet and reserved but modest
* Incredibly trustworthy and someone that the staff can lean on
* Willingness to take on responsibilities

**Jan – Chief Financial Officer**

* Detail oriented
* Took pride in the company

**Nick – Chief Operating Officer**

* Very ill-defined job
* Chief operator as well as COO
* Kind of a jerk

1. *Part Two: Lighting The Fire*

* First Test

Martin, the Chief Technologist sent a memo to the executive staff that him and JR will meet up with ASA Manufacturing for reviewing their product. Completely ignoring Kathryn’s first half of the retreat for the team. Kathryn went and spoke with Martin directly and told him that there aren’t any excuses for missing the team retreat. After telling him that she said that the CEO from ASA Manufacturing owes her a favor, so if Martin needed help rescheduling the appointment she could help. She left the room leaving Martin.

* End Run

Jeff decided to take Kathryn out to discuss the interaction between Martin and her, but through the conversation Kathryn was able to persuade him that the internals of the company are more important. She was hired to fix the problem and that is what she is going to do, while telling Jeff in a caring but strong manner. They engaged in small talk in small talk then headed back to the office.

* Drawing The Line

The chairman contacted Kathryn about the “Martin incident” after work and told her that she should get to know her staff prior to demanding things from them. Kathryn then explained to the chairman that she has been watching the staff for two weeks, noticed that there is no sense of community, and is trying to put the pieces to together. Although the chairman didn’t completely understand, he would be willing to give her a chance, sense this is what she is good at doing.

* Napa

Napa Valley would be the local that executive staff would have they’re retreat, in a small inn located in the town of Yountville. The meeting started at 9:00 A.M., with everyone checked in and accounted for besides Martin. Almost panicking as the time got closer and closer to 9, Martin eventually walked in and Kathryn became calm again.

* The Speech

Kathryn began telling the staff how the company was successful in many aspects, but lacking the most in a major one: becoming a team. The next two days of the retreat will determine who will really want to be a part of a team. The bottom line for this retreat and the next few months is to make the company succeed, that’s it. Kathryn drew up a triangle with four horizontal lines, telling the team that there are 5 dysfunctions of a team. One: absence of trust – “teams are not afraid to admit their mistakes, their weakness, and their concerns without fear of reprisal”. This is where the team will start first.

* Pushing Back

Jan, the chief financial adviser, asked Jan if the reason she thinks that the staff doesn’t trust each other is because Kathryn doesn’t know them very well. However, Kathryn suggests that one of the reasons that the team is dysfunctional is because there isn’t enough debate at the meetings. Everyone goes about their thing without being invested. Mikey suggested the reasoning that there isn’t enough discussion is because “people are too busy to have lengthy debates”. Most people disagreed which lead Kathryn to find that if the staff doesn’t agree on most things, and don’t seem to be willing to admit concerns, then that is a problem. The discussion came to a close by the sounds of Martin’s typing became louder.

* Entering The Danger

Kathryn asked Martin what he was working on, to which he responded that

* Getting Naked
* Going Deeper
* Poolside
* Rebound
* Awareness
* Ego
* Goals
* Deep Tissue
* Attack
* Exhibition
* Film Noir
* Application

1. *Part Three: Heavy Lifting*

* One-Site
* Fireworks
* Leaks
* Off-Site Number Two
* Plowing On
* Accountability
* Individual Contributor
* The Talk
* Last Stand
* Flack
* Heavy Lifting
* Rally

1. *Part Four: Traction*

* Harvest
* Gut Check
* The March

**The Model**

1. *An Overview of the Model*
2. *Team Assessment*
3. *Understanding and Overcoming*

* *The Five Dysfunctions*