



The Advantage

By Patrick Lencioni

DISCIPLINE 1: BUILD A COHESIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

An organisation cannot be healthy if the people who are chartered with running it are not **BEHAVIOURALLY COHESIVELY** in five fundamental ways.

DISCIPLINE 2: CREATE CLARITY

In addition to being behaviourally cohesive, the leadership team of a healthy organisation must be **INTELLECTUALLY ALLIGNED** and **COMMITTED** to the same answers to six simple but critical questions.

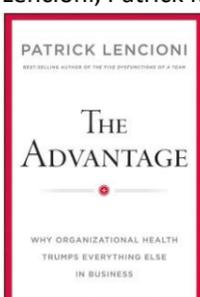
DISCIPLINE 3: OVERCOMMUNICATE CLARITY

Once the leaders have clarity, they must then communicate it to employees clearly, repeatedly, enthusiastically, and REPEATEDLY (that's not a typo). When it comes to reinforcing clarity, there is no such thing as too much communication!

DISCIPLINE 4: REINFORCE CLARITY

In order for an organisation to remain healthy over time, leaders must establish a few critical, nonbureaucratic systems to reinforce clarity in every process that involves people. Every **POLICY**, every **PROGRAM**, every **ACTIVITY** should be designed to remind employees what is really most important.

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DISCIPLINE 1: BUILD A COHESIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

An organization simply cannot be healthy if the people who are chartered with running it are not behaviorally cohesive in five fundamental ways. In any kind of organization, from a corporation to a department within that corporation, from a small, entrepreneurial company to a church or a school, dysfunction and lack of cohesion at the top inevitably lead to a lack of health throughout.

The first and most critical step in a healthy organization is creating a cohesive leadership team that is committed to do the ongoing work of developing and maintaining a high-performing team and mastering the five behaviors outlined in The Five Dysfunctions of a Team.

DISCIPLINE 2: CREATE CLARITY

In addition to being behaviorally cohesive, the leadership team of a healthy organization must be intellectually aligned and committed to the same answers to six simple but critical questions. There can be no daylight between leaders around these fundamental issues.

Creating clarity at the executive level is essential to building and maintaining a healthy organization. There are six simple but critical questions that need to be answered, eliminating all discrepancies among team members.

DISCIPLINE 3: OVERCOMMUNICATE CLARITY

Once a leadership team has established behavioral cohesion and created clarity around the answers to those questions, it must then communicate those answers to employees clearly, repeatedly, enthusiastically, and repeatedly (that's not a typo). When it comes to reinforcing clarity, there is no such thing as too much communication.

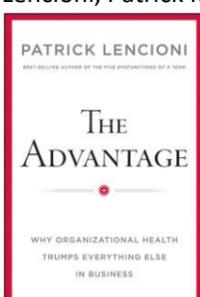
Once a leadership team has become cohesive and established clarity around the six critical questions, they need to communicate the answers to employees over and over again. There are specific communication strategies the leadership team can employ to ensure that messaging is consistent and absorbed by employees.

DISCIPLINE 4: REINFORCE CLARITY

Finally, in order for an organization to remain healthy over time, its leaders must establish a few critical, nonbureaucratic systems to reinforce clarity in every process that involves people. Every policy, every program, every activity should be designed to remind employees what is really most important.

For an organization to be healthy, organizational clarity (the six critical questions) must become embedded into the fabric of the organization. Systems in the following areas need to tie to the six questions: Recruiting and hiring, managing performance, compensation and rewards and real-time recognition.

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DISCIPLINE 1: BUILD A COHESIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

BEHAVIOUR 1: BUILDING TRUST

VULNERABILITY-BASED trust is necessary to build a great team: *“I screwed up” “I need help” “Your idea is better than mine” “I wish I could learn to do that as well as you do” and even “I’m sorry”.*

BEHAVIOUR 2: MASTERING CONFLICT

Contrary to popular wisdom and behaviour, conflict is not a bad thing for a team. In fact, the fear of conflict is almost always a sign of problems.

BEHAVIOUR 3: ACHIEVING COMMITMENT

Conflict is important because commitment can’t be achieved without it. People will not actively commit to a decision if they have not had the opportunity to input, ask questions, and understand the rationale behind it.

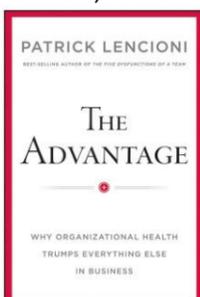
BEHAVIOUR 4: EMBRACING ACCOUNTABILITY

A team needs to be held accountable if it is going to stick to its decisions and accomplish its goals.

BEHAVIOUR 5: FOCUSING ON RESULTS

One of the greatest challenges to team success is the inattention to **COLLECTIVE** results.

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DISCIPLINE 2: CREATE CLARITY

QUESTION 1: WHY DO WE EXIST?

The underlying reason for being... the core purpose?

QUESTION 2: HOW DO WE BEHAVE?

Intolerance is essential. If an organisation is tolerant of everything, it will stand for nothing.

QUESTION 3: WHAT DO WE DO?

Opposite to why. Simple. Nothing more than a description of what an organization actually does.

QUESTION 4: HOW WILL WE SUCCEED?

When team leaders answer this question, essentially, they are determining their strategy. What are the three strategic anchors?

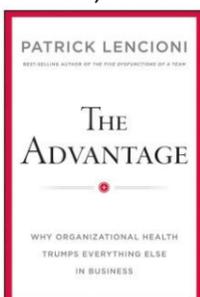
QUESTION 5: WHAT IS IMPORTANT, RIGHT NOW?

Answering this one will have the most immediate and tangible impact on an organisation.

QUESTION 6: WHO MUST DO WHAT?

Every organisation of any size needs some division of labour.

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DISCIPLINE 3: Overcommunicate Clarity

CASCADING INFORMATION

The best way to ensure that a message gets communicated throughout an organization is to spread rumors about it. Therefore, they concluded, leaders simply ought to go out and tell “true rumors.” As silly as that may sound, it is the basis for the most important means of communication within a healthy organization.

The most reliable and effective way to get an organization moving in the same direction is for members of a leadership team to come out of their meetings with a clear message about what was decided, promptly communicate that message to their direct reports, and have those direct reports do the same for their own direct reports. We call this “cascading communication” because it begins the structured but interpersonal process of rolling key messages down through the organization directly from the leadership team.

TOP-DOWN COMMUNICATION

This is the most common direction that critical information travels in an organization, and the various tools used to do it include all-hands meetings, employee newsletters, regular e-mail announcements, social media, and, of course, cascading communication.

The reason most organizations fail to communicate to employees is not that they don’t know how to build an intranet site or write a blog or design a PowerPoint presentation, but that they don’t achieve clarity around key messages and stick with them.

UPWARD AND LATERAL COMMUNICATION

Providing employees with a means of communicating upward to their leaders is important in any organization. However, it’s not the panacea it’s often presented to be. That’s because noncohesive leadership teams that have not aligned themselves around common answers to critical questions are not in a position to respond adequately to employee input and requests. In fact, getting more input from employees often only exacerbates frustration in an organization when that input cannot be digested and used.

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