The Advantage

By Patrick Lencioni

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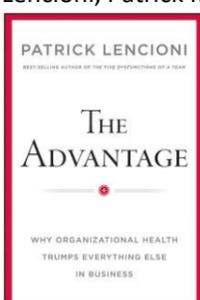
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DISCIPLINE 1: BUILD A COHESIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

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 **COMMITED** 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**, **ENTHUSITICATELY**, and <u>REPEATEDLY</u> (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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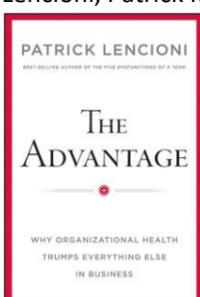
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DISCIPLINE 1: BUILD A COHESIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

An organization simply cannot be healthy if the people who are chartered with running it are not behaviourally 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 behaviours outlined in The Five Dysfunctions of a Team.

DISCIPLINE 2: CREATE CLARITY

In addition to being behaviourally 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 behavioural 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.
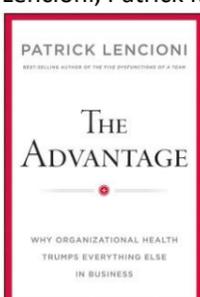
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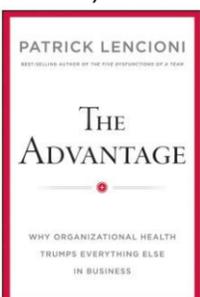
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DISCIPLINE 1: BUILD A COHESIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

BEHAVIOUR 1: BUILDING TRUST

VULNERABALITY-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.

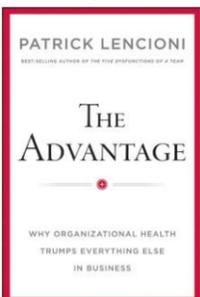## BEHAVIOUR 5: FOCUSING ON RESULTS

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

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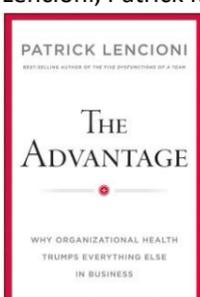
DISCIPLINE 2: CREATE CLARITY

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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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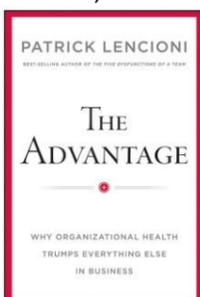
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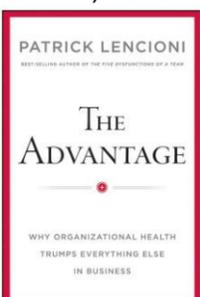
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CASCADING INFORATION

The best way to ensure that a message gets communicated throughout an organization is to spread rumours about it. Therefore, they concluded, leaders simply ought to go out and tell "true rumours." 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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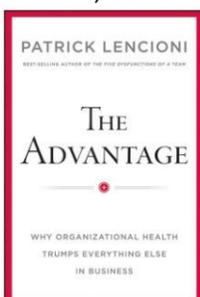
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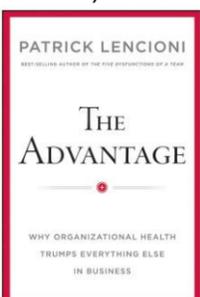
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DISCIPLINE 4: REINFORCE CLARITY

RECRUITING AND HIRING

Bringing the right people into an organization, and keeping the wrong ones out, is as important as any activity that a leadership team must oversee.

Define exactly what the right and wrong people look like; clarify a meaningful set of behavioural values that they can use to screen potential employees.

Hiring without clear and strict criteria for cultural fit greatly hampers the potential for success of any organization.

ORIENTATION

The most memorable time of an employee's career, and the time with the biggest impact, are his or her first days and weeks on a new job. The impact of first impressions is just that powerful, and healthy companies take advantage of that to move new employees in the right direction. Organizations should focus on reinforcing the answers to the six critical questions (from other discipline: Create Clarity).

Help new employees immediately see how they will contribute to the greater good of the organization.

Contrast this with the way so many organizations handle orientation. Rather than reinforcing the most important messages of the firm, they delegate responsibility to administrative functions that naturally focus on, administrative functions.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Nothing has the potential for bureaucracy and wonkiness like performance management systems. Some performance management processes have become a tool to protect the company legally; a legal defence from being sued by an employee that has been fired.

Healthy organizations believe that performance management is almost exclusively about eliminating confusion. They realize that most of their employees want to succeed, and that the best way to allow them to do that is to give them clear direction, regular information about how they're doing, and access to the coaching they need.

The best performance management programs are simple. Above all else, they are designed to stimulate the right kinds of conversations around the right topics.

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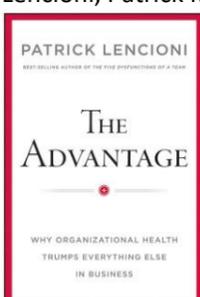
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DISCIPLINE 4: REINFORCE CLARITY (CONT.)

COMPENSATION AND REWARDS

The single most important reason to reward people is to provide them with an incentive for doing what is best for the organization.

Compensation and rewards programs should be simple, understandable, and, most important of all, clearly designed to remind employees what is most important. At the core of any of these systems must lie the answers to the six critical questions (from other discipline: Create Clarity). For instance, when employees are given a raise, they need to understand that they are being rewarded for behaving or performing in a way that is consistent with the organization's reason for existing, core values, strategic anchors, or thematic goal.

RECOGNITION

As important as compensation and rewards are, they aren't the most effective or important means of motivating people in a healthy organization. Direct, personal feedback really is the simplest and most effective form of motivation.

So why isn't this more common? For one, many leaders convince themselves that employees are motivated primarily by money. As a result, they discount the impact of authentic and specific expressions of appreciation and focus instead on financial rewards like raises and bonuses. What leaders need to understand is that the vast majority of employees, at all levels of an organization, see financial rewards as a satisfier, not a driver. In fact, gratitude, recognition, increased responsibilities, and other forms of genuine appreciation are drivers.

FIRING

In a healthy organization, a leader who is thinking about letting someone go will evaluate that person against the entirety of the company's values.

If an employee's behaviour is consistent with the values, there is a good chance that it would be a mistake to let him or her go. Essentially he/she has the raw material to fit into the organization and be successful. Instead of firing, the company should take a closer look at how the person is being managed and find a way to give them a chance to succeed.

Conversely, keeping a relatively strong performer who is not a cultural fit creates a variety of problems. Most important of all, it sends a loud and clear message to employees that the organization isn't all that serious about what it says it believes.

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