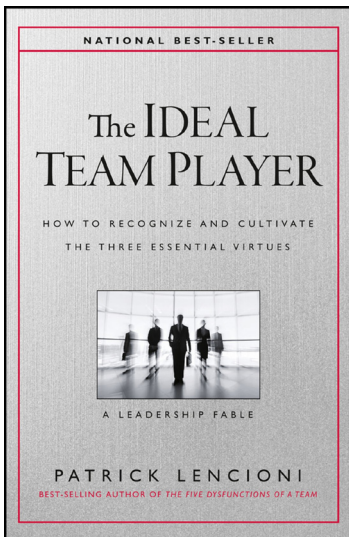


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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Patrick Lencioni is president of The Table Group, a management consulting firm, and the author of ten best-selling books.

The Ideal Team Player

THE SUMMARY

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The Three Virtues of an Ideal Team Player

For organizations seriously committed to making teamwork a cultural reality, I'm convinced that "the right people," are the ones who have three virtues in common — humility, hunger, and people smarts.

HUMBLE — Great team players lack excessive ego or concerns about status. They are quick to point out the contributions of others and slow to seek attention for their own. They share credit, emphasize team over self, and define success collectively rather than individually.

HUNGRY — Hungry people are always looking for more. More things to do. More to learn. More responsibility to take on. Hungry people almost never have to be pushed by a manager to work harder because they are self-motivated and diligent. They are constantly thinking about the next step and the next opportunity.

SMART — In the context of a team, smart simply refers to a person's common sense about people. Smart people are interpersonally appropriate and aware. They ask good questions, listen to what others are saying, and stay engaged in conversations intently. Smart people have good judgment and intuition, and understand the impact of their words and actions.

The History of the Model

Back in 1977, a group of colleagues and I started our management consulting firm, The Table Group. We asked ourselves the question, Could a person fully

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practice the five behaviors at the heart of teamwork if he or she didn't buy into the idea of being humble, hungry, and smart? The answer was a resounding no.

The Ideal Team Player Model

When team members are adequately strong in these three areas, they enable teamwork and overcome the five dysfunctions of a team. That means they'll be more likely to be vulnerable and build trust, engage in productive but uncomfortable conflict with team members, commit to group decisions even if they initially disagree, hold their peers accountable when they see performance gaps that can be addressed, and put the results of the team ahead of their own needs.

Those who don't have all three virtues are going to require significantly more time, attention, and patience from their managers.

Application #1: HIRING

The most reliable way to ensure that teamwork takes hold in an organization would be to hire only ideal team players. The most important part of interviewing for team players is simply knowing which answers and behaviors are the best indicators of humility, hunger and people smarts and then making the interviews as revealing as possible.

Application #2: Assessing Current Employees

Another extremely important application of the ideal team player model is the assessment or evaluation of current employees. There are three outcomes—confirm the employee is ideal, help the employee improve, or decide to move the employee out.

Application #3: Developing Employees Who Lack One or More Virtue.

The most important part of the development process, and the part that is so often missing, is the leader's commitment to constantly "reminding" an employee if she is not yet doing what is needed. Without this, improvement will not occur. Why don't most managers do it? Because it's uncomfortable. No one likes telling a person for the fifth week in a row that she still isn't working hard enough or isn't dealing with colleagues in a socially appropriate way. It's unpleasant and it's awkward, and yet, it's what a manager must do.

Application#4: Embedding the Model into an Organization's Culture

I believe that teamwork is not a virtue, but rather a choice. It's a strategic decision and an intentional one, which means that it's not for everyone. Leaders who believe teamwork is important and expect their people to be humble, hungry, and smart should come right out and say so. Leaders should be constantly on the lookout for any displays of those virtues and hold them up as examples for everyone to see. Whenever you see a behavior that violates one of the values, take the time to let the violator know that his behavior is out of line.

Connecting the Ideal Team Player Model with Five Dysfunctions of a Team

When team members improve their abilities to be humble, hungry, or smart, they'll be able to make more progress in overcoming the five dysfunctions on a regular basis.

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A Final Thought—Beyond Work Teams

Over the past twenty years, it has become clear to me that a humble, hungry, and smart spouse, parent, friend, or neighbor is going to be a more effective, inspiring, and attractive person—one that draws others to them and serves others better.