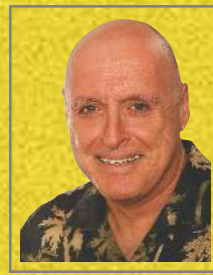


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 695 Dysfunctions of a Team — Part 2

More dysfunction coming today. I'm Jerry Roberts and we'll dig into why we often have so much trouble with workplace teams. That's coming next, on The Extra Point.

Yesterday, we began talking about dysfunctional teams. In 2002, consultant Patrick Lencioni published what has become a widely referenced book on team building, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Yesterday, we discussed dysfunction number one, the absence of trust. You can download that Extra Point, #694, at [guamtraining.com](http://guamtraining.com).

Today, dysfunction number two, the fear of conflict. Here's a statement Lencioni makes, and you have to listen carefully. He says: "By building trust, teams make conflict possible." I'm going to say it again. "By building trust, teams make conflict possible." The first time I saw this on a group[, going on 20 years ago, someone said, "Wait a minute, I don't want conflict. If I build trust, that makes conflict possible?"

Well, it does, and in this context, conflict is a good thing. Lencioni would tell you that until you can generate honest conflict, it's a bad thing for the organization. Why is that? Because when you can disagree on things, and do so constructively, you can make real progress.

So many workplaces have what Lencioni calls "artificial harmony." Everybody smiles at everybody else, and never is heard a discouraging word, and we all get along well.

Lencioni believes that it is these places where you'll discover unbearable tension, boring meetings, and back-channel office politics, and the seeds of discontent are preparing to deliver a harvest of unhappiness.

Leaders often make the mistake of trying to protect people from conflict. It's admirable

that you want to shield your workers from tough conversations, from people getting up in their face, from people taking their ideas apart in a meeting, from being exposed publicly that they may not be ready for a big promotion. Admirable? Okay. Helpful? I doubt it.

Because rescuing people on your team before any discomfort befalls them, prevents these team members from developing coping skills for dealing with the conflict that most assuredly will face them in their career.

Phil Jackson, the basketball coach with the most NBA championships to his credit, had a strategy when he coached the L.A. Lakers, that folds in well with this concept. When the Lakers would see the opponent stage a big rally to wipe out their lead or put them behind, Jackson would rarely call a timeout to slow down the other team's momentum.

Instead, he let the players on the floor figure it out. Yes, he could have told them what was happening and how to deal with it, but there was much more value for them if they used their talents and their brains to come up with the answer and solve the conflict.

Here's an idea that Lencioni offers and I've advised the same thing in my training, that while you want to expose workers to conflict, you don't allow situations to jump the tracks when personalities clash and things turn personal.

Let me toss something else in that I believe adds power to this. After you've had workers experience conflict together, use it as a teaching moment in your group.

Let people talk about how they felt as the situation was mounting. Did the words they used calm things down or make them worse?

(Con't.)

The teaching moments will help others to prepare, when conflict comes their way.

From Patrick Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. We'll pick up on this Thursday. Have a blessed Veterans Day. Remember and celebrate those who have served America.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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