



Leadership Toolkit

Lencioni's Tools

Dysfunction #1	Dysfunction #2	Dysfunction #3	Dysfunction #4	Dysfunction #5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving Trust Tool • Personal histories exercise • Team effectiveness exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining • Real-time permission • Conflict norming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cascading Messaging • Commitment Clarification • Commit to the rules of engagement • Common cause or goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team scorecard • Progress reviews • Team Effectiveness • Team rewards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible Results • Scoreboard • Achieve Commitment

Achieving Trust Tool

Ask your team, “What’s frustrating you at work right now?”

Then pause. Really listen. Don’t explain or defend. Just take notes and say, “Thank you.”

This question does three powerful things:

1. It shows you care about their experience.
2. It uncovers real problems in your systems and workflows.
3. It gives you a list of behaviors and barriers you can actually fix.

When your team tells you what’s broken, they’re giving you a gift. Even if it’s hard to hear. And when they see you take action on that feedback—even one small change—you build trust faster than any team-building game or offsite retreat ever could.

Personal Histories Exercise

This exercise is a simple, low-risk team-building activity designed to build trust by encouraging team members to share personal background information. Each participant answers a few basic, non-invasive questions (e.g., *Where did you grow up? How many siblings do you have? What was a challenge you faced growing up?*) in a group setting. This helps humanize colleagues, break down barriers, and foster empathy, making it easier for team members to be open and vulnerable with one another.

It typically takes 15–30 minutes and is often used as a starting point for teams working on improving trust

Team Effectiveness Exercise

This is a practical and powerful tool designed to promote trust and constructive feedback within a team. In this activity, each team member is asked to identify and share one key strength and one area for improvement for every other member of the team. The process

is done in a respectful, structured format—often facilitated by a leader or coach—to ensure psychological safety.

The goal of the exercise is to increase self-awareness, encourage candid dialogue, and foster accountability, which are essential to a high-functioning team. It aligns with Lencioni's model by reinforcing vulnerability-based trust and helping teams move past fear of conflict and into meaningful collaboration. The activity typically takes 60–90 minutes, depending on team size.

Answer two questions:

What is the single most important behavioral quality that contributes to the strength of the team?

What is the single most important behavioral quality that detracts from the strength of the team?

Begin with leader and all share positive responses

- Ask the leader, Any surprises? Any clarification needed?
- Still with the leader—all go around the room with negatives
- Ask for clarification or any surprises
- All team members get + and -. Each team member is given the opportunity to have + or -.
- Have each team member summarize aloud for the team the one or two takeaways that they will work on individually. Email them to the leader
- Then they can report on progress

Mining

In this exercise, a leader or facilitator "mines" for conflict by identifying underlying tensions that may not be openly discussed. They bring these issues to the surface and encourage team members to engage in passionate, unfiltered debate about important topics. The goal is to create an environment where team members feel safe expressing differing opinions, leading to stronger commitment and better decision-making.

This method is particularly useful for teams that struggle with artificial harmony, where disagreements are avoided, leading to unresolved issues and lack of engagement. By embracing conflict in a structured way, teams can build trust and improve overall effectiveness.

Real-Time Permission

The exercise encourages leaders to recognize moments when they hold back due to discomfort and instead give themselves permission to act in real time.

The concept is based on the idea that leaders often avoid necessary conflict or accountability due to fear—whether it's fear of upsetting a team member, making an unpopular decision, or stepping into an uncomfortable situation. By consciously

acknowledging these moments and granting themselves permission to engage, leaders can foster a healthier, more productive team dynamic.

Conflict Norming

Conflict Norming Exercise helps teams establish clear norms for handling conflict in a healthy and productive way. It is based on the idea that teams often struggle with conflict due to differing comfort levels and approaches. By explicitly defining how conflict should be managed, teams can create a safe and structured environment for open discussions.

How the Exercise Works:

1. Identify Conflict Styles – Team members discuss their natural tendencies when facing conflict (e.g., avoidance, confrontation, passive-aggressiveness).
2. Define Healthy Conflict Norms – The team collaboratively sets guidelines for how disagreements should be handled. This may include:
 - Encouraging direct and respectful communication.
 - Avoiding personal attacks and focusing on ideas.
 - Ensuring all voices are heard before decisions are made.
3. Commit to the Norms – Each team member agrees to uphold the established norms and hold others accountable.
4. Practice & Reinforce – The team regularly revisits the norms, reflecting on how well they are being followed and making adjustments as needed.

Cascading Messaging

A communication strategy designed to ensure clarity and alignment within an organization. It emphasizes the importance of leaders consistently sharing key messages with their teams after important meetings or decisions.

How It Works:

1. Unified Messaging – Leaders agree on the key points to communicate, ensuring consistency across all levels.
2. Timely Communication – Messages should be shared within 24 to 48 hours to maintain momentum and prevent misinformation.
3. Direct Delivery – Leaders communicate messages in person whenever possible to allow for questions and clarification.
4. Preventing Rumors – By proactively sharing accurate information, organizations can prevent speculation and confusion.

Commitment Clarification

A leadership exercise designed to ensure that teams fully understand and commit to decisions made during discussions. It helps eliminate ambiguity and fosters alignment, preventing second-guessing or hesitation.

How It Works:

1. Define Key Decisions – At the end of a meeting, clearly outline the decisions made and ensure everyone understands them.
2. Confirm Buy-In – Team members express their agreement and commitment, even if they initially had differing opinions.
3. Clarify Next Steps – Assign responsibilities and deadlines to ensure follow-through.
4. Prevent Rehashing – Once a decision is made, avoid revisiting it unless new, critical information arises.

Commit to the Rules of Engagement

A leadership exercise that helps teams establish clear behavioral expectations to foster trust, accountability, and effective collaboration.

How It Works:

1. Define the Rules – The team collectively agrees on key principles for communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making.
2. Ensure Buy-In – Each member commits to following these rules, reinforcing a shared understanding of acceptable behavior.
3. Hold Each Other Accountable – Team members actively remind and support one another in adhering to the agreed-upon norms.
4. Revisit & Adjust – Periodically review the rules to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

Rally around a common cause or goal

A leadership strategy that helps teams align around a single, compelling priority. It ensures that everyone is focused on the same objective, fostering unity and commitment.

How It Works:

1. Define the Rallying Cry – Identify a short-term, overarching goal that is critical for the team's success.
2. Clarify Supporting Objectives – Break down the rallying cry into specific, actionable steps that contribute to achieving the goal.
3. Communicate Clearly – Ensure that every team member understands the priority and how their role contributes to it.
4. Maintain Focus – Keep discussions, meetings, and decisions centered around the rallying cry to prevent distractions.
5. Reassess & Adjust – Once the goal is achieved, establish a new rallying cry to maintain momentum.

Team Scorecard

A tool designed to help teams clearly define and track their goals and standards. It ensures alignment and accountability by making expectations visible and measurable.

How It Works:

1. Define Key Goals – Identify the most important objectives the team needs to achieve.
2. Set Measurable Standards – Establish clear benchmarks for success, ensuring that progress can be tracked.
3. Publish the Scorecard – Make the goals and standards accessible to all team members, reinforcing transparency.
4. Review & Adjust Regularly – Continuously assess performance and refine the scorecard as needed.

Progress Reviews

A structured approach to tracking team performance and ensuring accountability. They help teams stay aligned with their goals by regularly assessing progress and making necessary adjustments.

How It Works:

1. Set Clear Objectives – Define measurable goals that the team is working toward.
2. Schedule Regular Check-Ins – Conduct periodic reviews to evaluate progress and address challenges.
3. Encourage Honest Feedback – Foster open discussions about what's working and what needs improvement.
4. Adjust Strategies as Needed – Make course corrections based on insights from the review process.
5. Celebrate Wins – Recognize achievements to maintain motivation and engagement.

Team Rewards

This concept emphasizes recognizing and celebrating collective achievements rather than individual accomplishments. It aligns with his philosophy that high-performing teams prioritize shared success over personal gain.

How It Works:

1. Shift Focus to Team Success – Encourage a culture where rewards are based on team performance, reinforcing collaboration.
2. Define Meaningful Rewards – Identify incentives that genuinely motivate the team, whether it's recognition, bonuses, or shared experiences.
3. Celebrate Milestones Together – Acknowledge progress and achievements in a way that strengthens unity.
4. Avoid Individual Competition – Ensure rewards do not create unhealthy rivalries but instead foster mutual support.

Visible Results

This emphasizes the importance of maintaining a strong focus on outcomes to drive team success. It is the final stage in his *Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team* model, reinforcing accountability and collective achievement.

How It Works:

1. Define Key Results – Clearly outline the measurable goals the team is working toward.
2. Make Results Visible – Use dashboards, scorecards, or regular updates to keep progress transparent.
3. Celebrate Achievements – Recognize milestones to maintain motivation and engagement.
4. Hold Each Other Accountable – Ensure team members stay committed to shared objectives.
5. Avoid Distractions – Keep discussions and decisions centered around achieving results.

Create a Scoreboard

This emphasizes the importance of tracking team performance through a clear and actionable scoreboard. It ensures that teams stay focused on their priorities and make informed decisions.

How It Works:

1. Define Key Metrics – Identify the most important indicators of success for the team.
2. Keep It Simple – The scoreboard should contain only essential data to avoid overwhelming team members.
3. Make It Visible – Ensure that the scoreboard is accessible to everyone, reinforcing transparency.
4. Review Regularly – Teams should frequently check the scoreboard to assess progress and adjust strategies.
5. Use It to Drive Action – The scoreboard should guide decision-making and motivate the team toward achieving goals.

Achieve Commitment

This emphasizes the importance of ensuring that teams fully buy into decisions, even when there is disagreement. Commitment is not about consensus—it's about clarity and confidence in moving forward.

How It Works:

1. Encourage Healthy Conflict – Before commitment can happen, teams must engage in open and honest debate. Lencioni stresses that conflict leads to commitment because people are more likely to support decisions when they feel heard.

2. Clarify Decisions – At the end of discussions, leaders should clearly outline what has been decided and why.
3. Ensure Buy-In – Even if some team members initially disagreed, they should commit to the decision once it's made.
4. Prevent Hesitation – Avoid revisiting decisions unless new, critical information arises.
5. Lead with Confidence – Leaders must model commitment by standing behind decisions and reinforcing them.

Additional Tools

WorkingGenius.com

<https://brenebrown.com/hubs/dare-to-lead/>

<https://daretolead.brenebrown.com/assessment/>

[Thomas Kilmann Conflict Model](#); [Diagnostic Tool](#)

[National School Reform Faculty Protocols](#)

Compass Points

The Compass Points Exercise is a team-building activity designed to help individuals understand their work and decision-making styles. It categorizes participants into four personality types—North, South, East, and West—based on their approach to teamwork and problem-solving. This exercise is widely used in leadership training and team development to foster self-awareness and improve group dynamics.

How It Works:

1. Identify Your Style – Participants choose the direction that best represents their work style:
 - North (Action-Oriented) – Prefers to dive in and get things done quickly.
 - South (People-Focused) – Prioritizes relationships and ensures everyone feels heard.
 - East (Big-Picture Thinker) – Focuses on vision and possibilities before acting.
 - West (Detail-Oriented) – Prefers structure, planning, and analyzing details before moving forward.
2. Group Discussion – Each group discusses:
 - Strengths of their style.
 - Challenges they face when working with other styles.
 - How they can collaborate effectively with different personality types.
3. Reflection & Application – Teams explore how understanding these styles can improve communication, collaboration, and decision-making.

An [assessment](#) is available

Achieving Trust Activity

Ask your team, “What’s frustrating you at work right now?” Then pause. Really listen. Don’t explain or defend. Just take notes and say, “Thank you.” This question does three powerful things:

1. It shows you care about their experience.
2. It uncovers real problems in your systems and workflows.
3. It gives you a list of behaviors and barriers you can actually fix.

When your team tells you what’s broken, they’re giving you a gift. Even if it’s hard to hear. And when they see you take action on that feedback—even one small change—you build trust faster than any team-building game or offsite retreat ever could.

Video: [LeeAnn Renninger’s Four Part Format for Giving Feedback](#)

1. Micro-yes: Ask a short, important, yes or no question
2. Data Point: What you saw and heard, no blur words, convert the blur words into a data point
3. Show impact: give a sense of purpose and meaning
4. End on a question: Wrap it up with a question, creates commitment and not compliance

These can be mixed and matched for any difficult conversation

Participant Handout: My Style in Action

Objective: Reflect on your personal conflict style and how it influences your response to workplace conflict.

Step 1: Know the Styles

Style	Description
Competing	Assertive, uncooperative – “I push to win”
Collaborating	Assertive, cooperative – “We find a win-win”
Compromising	Balanced approach – “Let’s meet halfway”
Avoiding	Unassertive, uncooperative – “I stay out of it”
Accommodating	Unassertive, cooperative – “I give in to keep peace”

My default style is: _____

Step 2: Scenario Reflection

Scenario:

You’re on a project team. A teammate frequently overrides your input and takes over decisions. Your manager isn’t aware of the dynamic.

Reflection Questions: 1. What is your instinctive response in this situation? 2. Which TKI style does that reflect? 3. How has that style helped you in the past? 4. How has it sometimes created challenges? 5. What might be the impact of trying a different style in this scenario?

Key Takeaway:

Every conflict style has strengths and limits. Self-awareness gives you the power to choose the best approach for each situation.

Write one intention for the next time you experience conflict:

“Next time, I want to try...” _____

Participant Handout: Decide & Drive

Focus: Lencioni's 3rd Dysfunction – Failure to Commit

Duration: 5–10 minutes

Step 1: Mini-Scenario Reflection

Prompt: Think of a recent decision your team delayed or avoided committing to. It might relate to strategy, hiring, process, or priorities.

Write briefly: 1. **What was the decision or issue?**

2. **What caused the hesitation or indecision?**

3. **What was the impact of not committing?**
(e.g., delays, frustration, missed goals)

Step 2: Group Discussion (Optional Share-Out)

- What keeps us from committing to decisions as leaders?
 - What helps you personally move from uncertainty to action?
 - How does a lack of commitment affect your team?
-

Insight:

Commitment is not consensus. It means having the clarity to move forward, even if there isn't complete agreement.

Key Takeaway:

High-performing teams commit to decisions and support them fully. Indecision erodes trust, ownership, and results.

My personal commitment moving forward:

Next time my team is hesitating, I will:

Practicing Crucial Conversations: Leadership Handout

◆ What Makes a Conversation Crucial?

- High Stakes – The outcome matters.
- Strong Emotions – Feelings may impact how we show up.
- Differing Opinions – Perspectives are not aligned.

◆ 4 Tools to Use During Crucial Conversations

✓ Start with Heart

- Ask yourself: What do I really want? (For me, for them, for the relationship?)
- Stay focused on goals, not being “right.”

✓ STATE Your Path

1. Share your facts – Start with the least controversial.
2. Tell your story – Share your interpretation.
3. Ask for others’ paths – Invite their perspective.
4. Talk tentatively – Avoid absolutes.
5. Encourage testing – Create openness to dialogue.

✓ Make It Safe

- Mutual Purpose: “I want us to work together on this...”
- Contrasting: Clarify what you don’t intend and do intend.
Ex: “I’m not saying you don’t care — I’m saying I’m concerned about how the message landed.”

✓ Explore Others' Views (AMPP)

- Ask – “Can you help me understand your thinking?”
- Mirror – Reflect emotion: “You seem frustrated.”
- Paraphrase – “So you’re saying...”
- Prime – If they go silent: “Is it possible you’re worried I’m being unfair?”

◆ Practice Activity (5–7 min)

1. Partner up and pick a scenario (or a real but safe example).
2. One person starts the conversation, practicing the tools above.
3. Switch roles if time allows.

◆ Debrief (3 min)

Reflect with your partner:

- What worked?
- What was hard?
- How did you keep the conversation safe?
- What’s one thing you’d do differently?

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Activity: “Conflict Compass”

Objective: To help leaders understand their default conflict-handling styles (Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, Accommodating) and practice adapting their approach based on different workplace scenarios.

Duration: 90 minutes

Group Size: 4–20 leaders

Materials Needed: - Handouts on TKI model (included below) - Scenario cards (printable, included below) - Flipcharts or whiteboards - Markers - Sticky notes (5 colors if possible)

Part 1: Introduction (15 minutes)

1. Present the TKI model:
 - **Competing:** Assertive and uncooperative (win/lose)
 - **Collaborating:** Assertive and cooperative (win/win)
 - **Compromising:** Mid-assertive, mid-cooperative (mutual concession)
 - **Avoiding:** Unassertive and uncooperative (withdrawal)
 - **Accommodating:** Unassertive and cooperative (self-sacrifice)
 2. Provide participants with a brief self-assessment or ask them to choose their default style.
-

Part 2: Compass Walk (20 minutes)

1. Place 5 signs around the room for each style.
 2. Read out a conflict scenario (see below).
 3. Participants walk to the sign that matches their instinctive response.
 4. Discuss why they chose that style and what its benefits/drawbacks are.
 5. Repeat with 2–3 scenarios.
-

Part 3: Conflict Style in Action (30 minutes)

1. Divide into groups of 3–5.
2. Provide each group with a conflict scenario.
3. Instruct them to role-play a resolution using one assigned style.
4. Re-run the same scenario using a different style.
5. Discuss:
 - What changed?
 - Which approach worked better?