



Ed Leaders'
LAB

BUILDING A STRONG AND EFFECTIVE TEAM

(PART ONE)

ALEISE WHITE

aleise@coachingcolab.com

VER. 01
COACHING COLAB LTD
2025

BUILDING A STRONG AND EFFECTIVE TEAM (PART ONE)

TOOL OVERVIEW

This tool helps you guide your team through the first two foundations of team effectiveness; building trust and managing healthy conflict.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. 5 Dysfunctions of a Team
3. Creating a shared understanding about trust and conflict
4. Facilitator guidelines
5. Make it stick!



INTRODUCTION

Think of a great team you've been part of. What made it work so well? Chances are, trust and open communication were big factors. Patrick Lencioni found that when teams struggle, it usually comes down to five main problems. The good news? Once you understand these problems, you can fix them.

The pyramid below identifies these problems, and the difference between dysfunctional teams and high performing teams.

High Performing Team Features

Focuses on team success; celebrates collective results.

Holds peers accountable; maintains high standards.

Commits to decisions; embraces accountability.

Engages in constructive debate; values diverse perspectives.

Shares vulnerabilities; builds mutual trust.

Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Lack of Results

Avoidance of Accountability

Lack of Commitment

Fear of Conflict

Absence of Trust

Dysfunctional Team Features

Prioritises individual goals; neglects team outcomes.

Shuns responsibility; ignores low standards.

Doesn't make decisions; is unclear.

Avoids healthy debate; seeks artificial harmony.

Conceals weaknesses; fears vulnerability.

THE 5 PROBLEMS

1. No Trust

What it looks like:

- People hide their mistakes
- Nobody admits when they need help
- Team members keep their opinions to themselves
- Everyone tries to look perfect

Why it matters: Without trust, team members spend too much energy protecting themselves instead of doing great work together.

2. Fear of Conflict

What it looks like:

- Meetings are boring
- No one challenges ideas
- People agree in the meeting but complain after
- Real issues are discussed in the carpark

Why it matters: When people are afraid to disagree, you miss out on great ideas and problems don't get solved.



3. Lack of Commitment

What it looks like:

- Decisions don't stick
- People say yes but don't follow through
- Team members aren't sure what others are doing
- Everything seems urgent but nothing gets done

Why it matters: Without real discussion and clear decisions, people don't truly buy into plans.

4. Avoiding Accountability

What it looks like:

- Poor performance goes unchallenged
- Standards keep slipping
- Deadlines are treated as suggestions
- The leader is the only one who holds people accountable

Why it matters: When team members don't hold each other accountable, quality drops and resentment builds.



5. Not Focusing on Results

What it looks like:

- Individual goals matter more than team goals
- Competition between team members
- More talk about personal success than team success
- "Good enough" becomes normal



Why it matters: Without shared goals, the team can't achieve great results together.

CREATING SHARED UNDERSTANDING ABOUT TRUST AND CONFLICT

This toolkit helps you guide your team through the first two foundations of team effectiveness: building trust and managing healthy conflict. These elements are essential before teams can move on to commitment, accountability, and results (covered in Part 2).

This process helps your team create clear agreements about how you'll work together. Instead of imposing rules, you're helping the team discover and agree on what works best for them. The magic happens when team members feel ownership over these agreements because they helped create them.



FACILITATION GUIDE

Before you start:

- Schedule 60-90 minutes of uninterrupted time
- Choose a comfortable space
- Have sticky notes and markers ready
- Consider having snacks (food helps!)
- Make sure everyone can attend

Start by saying something like:

"Today we're going to create our team agreements about how we work together. This isn't about right or wrong ways - it's about finding what works best for us as a team. We'll focus on two key areas: how we build trust with each other and how we handle disagreements productively."

Part One: Building Relational Trust

Step one: Current state (15 mins)

Have everyone reflect and write on sticky notes what we **currently** do that builds trust. “In our team, trust looks like...”

Examples:

- Following through on promises
- Asking for help when needed
- Sharing credit for successes

Stick the post-its up on a wall or large piece of paper, and have everyone in the team read them. Group similar ideas together and discuss what ideas emerge.

Step two: Future state (15 mins)

On different coloured sticky notes, have everyone reflect and write **what else** we could do to build trust. “We could build more trust by...”

Examples:

- Having regular check-ins
- Being more open about challenges
- Supporting each other's growth

Stick the post-its up on a wall or large piece of paper, and have everyone in the team read them. Group similar ideas together and discuss what ideas emerge.



Step three: Summarising your ideas (20 mins)

The third step is to collate your ideas on what you currently do, and what you can do better.

Complete the table below to summarise how you build trust in your team.

In this team, we build trust by...
What we say: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
What we do: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
How we support each other: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••

Part Two: Productive Conflict

Step one: Current state (15 mins)

Have everyone reflect and write on sticky notes what we **currently** do that helps us have good discussions. “When we disagree, what works well is...”

Examples:

- Listening without interrupting
- Focusing on the issue, not the person
- Being open to different views

Stick the post-its up on a wall or large piece of paper, and have everyone in the team read them. Group similar ideas together and discuss what ideas emerge.

Step two: Future state (15 mins)

On different coloured sticky notes, have everyone reflect and write **what we could do differently**. “We could handle disagreements better by...”

Examples:

- Making space for quiet voices
- Checking understanding before disagreeing
- Following up after heated discussions

Stick the post-its up on a wall or large piece of paper, and have everyone in the team read them. Group similar ideas together and discuss what ideas emerge.



Step three: Summarising your ideas (20 mins)

The third step is to collate your ideas on what you currently do, and what you can do better.

Complete the table below to summarise how you handle conflict in your team. it.

In this team, we handle conflict by....

How we raise concerns:

-
-
-

How we discuss different views:

-
-
-

How we move forward after disagreement:

-
-
-

Part Three: Team Agreement

Now it's time to draft your team agreement by completing the template below.

Explain to the members of the team that they don't have to love or completely agree with every statement; they just need to be able to live with it.

Building Trust

We agree that trust in our team means:
(list points from discussion)

We show trust by:
(specific behaviours the team identified)

We build trust by:
(actions everyone agrees to take)

Handling Conflict

We agree that good conflict in our team means:
(List key points from discussion)

When we disagree, we will:
(Specific approaches the team agreed on)

After conflicts, we will:
(Actions for moving forward)

Signed by all team members:



MAKE IT STICK

It's really important that your agreement is revisited regularly, and not forgotten about after you make it. Below are some suggestions for helping your team to continue to engage with and reflect on your agreement.

1. Display your agreements where everyone can see them
2. Review regularly:
 - Start team meetings with a quick check
 - "How are we doing with our agreements?"
 - "What's working well?"
 - "What needs attention?"
3. Celebrate when you see it working:
 - Point out good examples
 - Thank people who model the agreements
 - Share success stories
4. Use gentle reminders:
 - "Remember, we agreed to..."
 - "How does this fit with our agreements?"
 - "What would help us stick to our agreements?"

Remember:

- These agreements are living documents, and can be continually updated.
- If you have a new person join your team, you will need to revisit the agreement, and see if there are things the new person would like added.
- If issues arise in your team, come back to the agreement, and discuss how the behaviours are aligned or not aligned with what everyone agreed.
- Keep checking in and celebrating wins.

THANK YOU

NEED MORE INSIGHT & SUPPORT?

Feel free to email Aleise at aleise@coachingcolab.com if you have any questions or need some further guidance on how to implement this tool.