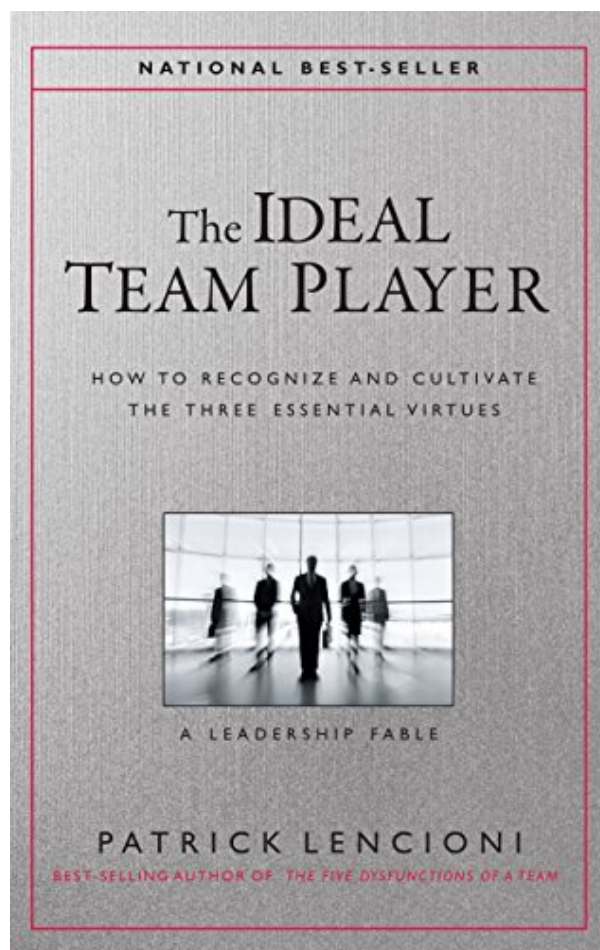


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ESSENTIAL VIRTUES BY PATRICK M.  
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# The IDEAL TEAM PLAYER

HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND CULTIVATE  
THE THREE ESSENTIAL VIRTUES



A LEADERSHIP FABLE

PATRICK LENCIONI

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM

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No Jackasses Allowed

By John W. Pearson

If I were still a CEO, here's The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results I would do this week:

STEP 1. Order four copies of Patrick Lencioni's new book, The Ideal Team Player.

STEP 2. Hand-deliver the book, along with a Starbucks card, to each of my direct reports, with this assignment: "Invest up to four hours at Starbucks this week—and read this important book. It's likely the most team-transforming exercise we'll do together this year."

STEP 3. Schedule a half-day off-site team meeting (for next week) to discuss "How to Recognize and Cultivate the Three Essential Virtues" (the book's sub-title).

STEP 4. Facilitate the senior team meeting (or invite a facilitator to do the honors) and get buy-in and commitment (a la Lencioni's pyramid in The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else In Business). Assign next steps.

[...]

STEP 5. Step back and watch your culture transform as you articulate three virtues: Humble, Hungry, and People Smart.

Wow! Patrick Lencioni has done it again! This is one powerful book--and maybe his funniest. In his classic "leadership fable" format (example: Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable...About Solving the Most Painful Problem in Business), Lencioni delivers a page-turning business story. New CEO. Two direct reports. Massive dysfunction. New hires needed yesterday. (Sound familiar?)

[...]

But there's another problem: the top three leaders cannot define the "ideal team player" qualities. (Can you?) Half of the people they hire either quit or are terminated. Finally...finally, they agree on one virtue:

"Maybe our new slogan should be  
'no jackasses allowed.'  
That would make a great poster."

So, in search of more acceptable lingo and meaning, the leadership triad lands on Humble, Hungry, and Smart. Lencioni defines these virtues in the final 60 pages (The Model and application), worth the price of the book.

HUMBLE: "Great team players lack excessive ego or concerns about status." He adds, "Humility is the single greatest and most indispensable attribute of being a team player."

HUNGRY: "Hungry people almost never have to be pushed by a manager to work harder because they are self-motivated and diligent."

SMART: "Smart simply refers to a person's common sense about people."

Caution #1: What if you settle for just one out of three? Or, if you're fortunate, two out of three virtues? After all, no one's perfect.

Lencioni: "What makes humble, hungry, and smart powerful and unique is not the individual attributes themselves, but rather the required combination of all three."

His memorable labels for the "one out of three" prospects are caution enough:

- Humble Only: The Pawn
- Hungry Only: The Bulldozer
- Smart Only: The Charmer

What About 2 Out of 3?

"The next three categories that we'll explore represent people who are more difficult to identify because the strengths associated with them often camouflage their weaknesses.

"Team members who fit into these categories lack only one of the three traits and thus have a little higher likelihood of overcoming their challenges and becoming ideal team players. Still, lacking even one in a serious way can impede the team building process."

Caution #2: Don't use the following labels at work—but they are perfect descriptors for your "2 out of 3" team members:

- Hungry and Humble, but Not Smart: The Accidental Mess-Maker
- Humble and Smart, but Not Hungry: The Lovable Slacker
- Hungry and Smart, but Not Humble: The Skillful Politician

Watch out for the banana peel when you're interviewing a candidate without humility. "Unfortunately, because they are so smart, Skillful Politicians are very adept at portraying themselves as being humble, making it hard for leaders to identify them and address their destructive behaviors."

Lencioni urges: Don't hire unless you and your team members can positively affirm a three-for-three person. I know. It's not easy, but read the book, and you'll be absolutely convinced.

Lencioni packs the last 60 pages with highly practical insights, warnings, and next steps. He lists very practical ways to assess your current team members and what to do with the 0-for-3, 1-for-3, and 2-for-3 people already on your team. He gives solutions, including a helpful self-assessment with 18 questions.

See you at Starbucks!

P.S. By the way, Andrew Murray's insights in *Humility* will whack you between your selfies (in just 59 pages): "Humility is the only soil in which the graces root; the lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure."

30 of 32 people found the following review helpful.

A Secular Business Book That Has Obvious Implications for Church Ministry Too

By George P. Wood

Effective organizations—whether they're multinational corporations, professional sports franchises, or local churches—practice teamwork. When people work together on a common goal, they achieve more than they could do individually and experience a measure of personal satisfaction. When people work against one another, however, the result is organizational ineffectiveness and personal frustration.

In his 2002 bestseller, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni outlined five ways teamwork goes awry: absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results. While that book identified the interpersonal dynamics of effective teams, it did not identify the personal qualities of effective team members. Lencioni's new book, *The Ideal Team Member*, picks up where *Five Dysfunctions* left off and outlines three essential "virtues": An ideal team member is humble, hungry, and smart.

Humility comes first because it is "the single greatest and most indispensable attribute of being a team player." Humble team players are not "overtly arrogant," of course, but they do not "lack self-confidence" either. Rather, quoting C. S. Lewis, Lencioni writes, "Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." Humility makes collective action possible. Without it, teams don't work effectively, because each member is either out for themselves (due to overt arrogance) or unable to propose solutions (because of lack of self-confidence).

"Hungry people are always looking for more," writes Lencioni. They are "self-motivated and diligent." For a team to work effectively, each team member must proactively contribute to the overall effort. No slackers are allowed.

Smart doesn't pertain to "intellectual capacity," though it's similar to emotional intelligence. Lencioni defines it as "a person's common sense about people...the ability to be interpersonally appropriate and aware." Ideal team members are people-smart.

After defining these three virtues, Lencioni outlines why and how they must work together. "If even one is missing in a team member, teamwork becomes significantly more difficult and sometimes not possible." A team member who is only humble and hungry, for example, becomes an "accidental mess-maker" because they are constantly—albeit unintentionally—stepping on others' toes. One who is only humble and smart is a "lovable slacker," liked by all, but only willing to exert minimum necessary effort. Someone who is only hungry and smart is a "skillful politician," which Lencioni describes as being "cleverly ambitious and willing to work extremely hard, but only in as much as it will benefit them personally."

Although Lencioni wrote *The Ideal Team Member* for the secular business world, my description of its

contents should convince ministers that it has application to the work of local churches as well. (Indeed, Lencioni—a devout Catholic—notes that Jesus Christ is the “most compelling example of humility in the history of mankind.”) The humble-hungry-smart model gives senior pastors and ministers who lead volunteers valuable insights into who to hire, how to assess their performance, what can be done to develop them when they lack one or more of the virtues, and how to embed those virtues in a church’s organizational culture. Consequently, I highly recommend this book to ministers and ministry leaders.

One final note: As with *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, *The Ideal Team Player* begins with what Lencioni calls “a leadership fable.” He tells the story of the CEO of a family-owned building company who discovers these three virtues in the course of taking over the reins of the company from his uncle. Only after telling the fable does Lencioni describe the humble-hungry-smart model in propositional terms. This narrative way of approaching the subject shows before it tells. This makes Lencioni’s points concrete and easy to understand. The show-then-tell approach is also, it seems to me, a great way to preach...though that is a subject for another time.

15 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

What Makes a Good Team Player? reviewed by Bill Pence of [CoramDeoTheBlog.com](http://CoramDeoTheBlog.com)

By Bill Pence

My favorite "business" book is *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni and a close second is his *The Advantage*. I put business in quotes because I have found the principles from *Five Dysfunctions* to be helpful on any team, be it in business, sports, a nonprofit or ministry. This new book picks up where *The Five Dysfunctions* left off.

Lencioni states that if someone were to ask him to make a list of the most valuable qualities a person should develop in order to thrive in the world of work—and for that matter, life—he would put being a team player at the top. In *The Five Dysfunctions* he explained that real teamwork requires tangible, specific behaviors: vulnerability-based trust, healthy conflict, active commitment, peer-to-peer accountability, and a focus on results. Here indicates that the three underlying virtues that enable them to be ideal team players are that they are humble, hungry, and smart.

He states that when a team member lacks one or more of these three virtues, the process of building a cohesive team is much more difficult than it should be, and in some cases, impossible. He writes that leaders who can identify, hire, and cultivate employees who are humble, hungry, and smart will have a serious advantage over those who cannot.

He states that the purpose of the book is to help the reader understand how the elusive combination of these three simple attributes can accelerate the process of making teamwork a reality in your organization or in your life so you can more effectively achieve the extraordinary benefits that it brings.

As is his usual approach (*The Advantage* was the exception), Lencioni illustrates his points in a leadership fable and then wraps up his points in a model at the end of the book. In this fable, we meet Jeff Shanley who lives and works in the Silicon Valley. After a few jobs in high-tech marketing, at age thirty-five he cofounded a technology start-up. Two years later, he was fortunate enough to get demoted when the board of directors hired what they called a grown-up CEO. During the next four years, that CEO, Kathryn Petersen, taught Jeff more about leadership, teamwork, and business than he could have learned in a decade of business school. When Kathryn retired, Jeff left the company and spent the next few years working at a small consulting firm in Half Moon Bay, over the hills from the Silicon Valley. As the book opens he is ready for a change. But it turns out to be a change that he didn’t see coming.

Jeff receives a phone call from his Uncle Bob, who owns Valley Builders, a successful building contractor in



Napa Valley. Eventually, due to his uncle's health problems, Jeff will take over the company from his uncle at a critical time for the organization, a time of both challenges and opportunities. Valley Builders has just landed two large projects. The company has never had two major projects like this at the same time, both of which are as big as they've ever done. They will need to add a net sixty people in the next two months, with five critical hires that will need to be made first – a project manager, three foremen, and a senior engineer. On top of that, they will need about a half dozen supervisors and about fifty contractors of all kinds.

Jeff and his leadership team at Valley Builders will need to look at their hiring process to assure that they hire true team players, the kind of person who can easily build trust, engage in healthy conflict, make real commitments, hold people accountable, and focus on the team's results. The life of their company will depend on it.

After the fable, the author covers the ideal team player model, what it means, where it comes from, and how it can be put to practical use. He states that “For organizations seriously committed to making teamwork a cultural reality, I'm convinced that “the right people” are the ones who have those three virtues in common—humility, hunger, and people smarts.” Included in this section is a helpful Manager Assessment. He also discusses peer evaluations versus peer discussion, stating that he believes “the most powerful activity that occurs around any assessment is peer discussion.”

I found his section connecting The Ideal Team Player Model with The Five Dysfunctions of A Team to be particularly helpful. He states that the ideal team player is all about the makeup of individual team members, while the five dysfunctions are about the dynamics of teams getting things done.

He ends the book by stating that over the past twenty years, it has become apparent to him that humility, hunger, and people smarts have relevance outside of the workplace, and that apart from the other two virtues, humility stands alone.

There is some profanity included in the leadership fable portion of the book. I found it of interest that two of the three virtues included here were included in Brad Lomenick's excellent 2015 book H3 Leadership: Be Humble. Stay Hungry. Always Hustle.

Lencioni points the reader to his website for additional resources about The Ideal Team Player.

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