Using the Myers-Briggs® Instrument with Lencioni's 5 Dysfunctions of a Team Model

Lencioni's program is based on his fable of a team in crisis that needs to overcome dysfunctional team dynamics in order to have an opportunity to be successful. It is informed by the fact that instruments are necessary to assist in creating a conversation that is safe and productive for team members. Lencioni endorses the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) assessment as his favorite and most effective tool to use in coordination with his model. The MBTI assessment is used in this capacity as a catalyst for the team members to begin a conversation about the similarities and differences in their styles. It is the foundation on which the members begin to understand one another in different ways and learn about their team and individual types. Without this knowledge, the team has difficulty starting its work on the first dysfunction, absence of trust.

The MBTI assessment is a critical part of making Lencioni's model successful. Lencioni alludes to the possibility of using other instruments but states that the instrument with the highest reliability and validity is the MBTI assessment. Quality and reputation are of absolute importance, particularly for teams that have been in a long-term cycle of dysfunction. If the first step of the model is performed using an instrument that is not effective, the whole process will fail. Buy-in at the outset is crucial for the success and integrity of using Lencioni's model.

To understand where to begin using the MBTI tool we will first recap Lencioni's 5 Dysfunctions of a Team model:

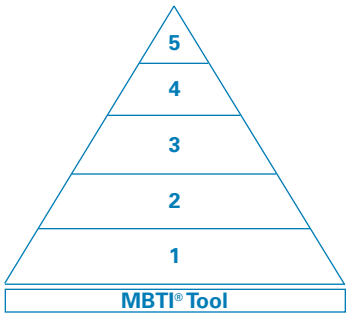
Dysfunction 5: Inattention to results

Dysfunction 4: Avoidance of accountability

Dysfunction 3: Lack of commitment

Dysfunction 2: Fear of conflict

Dysfunction 1: Absence of trust



HOW TO USE THE MBTI® INSTRUMENT IN OVERCOMING THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS

The chart on page 2 provides an overview of the synergy between the MBTI instrument and Lencioni's model. Next we will explore how to incorporate use of the MBTI assessment into each stage of the model in overcoming the five dysfunctions.

Role of Leader	Use the MBTI® Tool to
Take risks and set an example	Understand a person's style of trusting: What does it take to increase trust?
Mine for conflict	Flex your conflict style using your function pair to learn about conflict
Push for specifics, clarity, and closure	Avoid making assumptions and allow people to be heard
Face challenging issues	Encourage people to own their progress
Pay attention to team outcomes	Focus on team interests rather than individual interests; use knowledge of team type

Stage One: Building Trust

In his book, Lencioni states that time does not lend itself to increasing trust but, rather, courage builds trust. As facilitators we have to understand the consequences of pushing people on a team to reveal things about themselves too soon or waiting too long to engage in this type of dialogue. Here are some questions to ask at this stage:

- How comfortable are people with feeling vulnerable?
- How easy/difficult is it for people to share personal information with teammates?
- How can trust be maintained over time?

Lencioni suggests that building trust is a result of shared experiences over time, follow-through and credibility, and understanding what makes each person on the team unique. We can answer these questions by looking at certain MBTI preferences and understanding motivational style. For example, the S–N dichotomy asks the question, "What are the kinds of information people know and trust?" When we learn more about the types of information people need to feel more secure, we can satisfy those needs and then move on to a deeper level. As shown in the chart on page 3, people with a preference for Sensing tend to feel more secure when they have specific, concrete information—something tangible that they can sink their teeth into. When they feel they don't have enough information to proceed they are filled with fear and anxiety. For them, feeling secure is about doing their job exactly, correctly, and in the way they view as right. When teammates don't provide the information they need, a lack of trust builds, which makes it difficult for them to believe that others have the team's best interests at heart. People with a preference for Sensing can also see people with a preference for Intuition as having their head in the clouds, focusing on ideas and brainstorming rather than on the actual step-by-step implementation of the plan. If you share the specific, concrete, and essential information that the person with a Sensing preference craves, you will earn his or her respect and subsequently his or her trust.

People with a preference for Intuition need space and permission to formulate and share their ideas without immediately being shot down. They sometimes experience people with a preference for Sensing as overly critical and may be hesitant to share new ideas or personal information for fear of being judged. They want time to develop their ideas and vision as a process. This includes the essential brainstorming stage that can be irritating and uncomfortable for people with a

MBTI® Preference	What a Person Needs to Feel Trust in You
Sensing	• Specific information • Correct and exact information • To stay on topic during discussions • No embellishment of thoughts with unnecessary ideas • An opportunity to test out your ideas and see if they work • To talk to someone who has worked with you on a project • To learn more about your experience and credentials • An example of a project on which you were successful • A tangible idea with steps to implement it • A desire to maintain the status quo
Intuition	• To not be bogged down with unnecessary details • To have their ideas heard • To not have brainstorming sessions shot down too early • To have team members think in terms of "what if" rather than "what is" • A desire to do things better even if they are already working • Evidence that you have imagination and will use it • An attempt to step out of the trees and take the forest view • Belief that you are open to experimenting or trying new things • Permission to share their long-term vision of the plan • A willingness to hear ideas that are not perfectly metabolized

Sensing preference, who crave the status quo. Intuitive types feast on ideas and innovation and become more motivated when they are allowed to play with ways to get to the optimal desired outcome. They don't want to be immediately bogged down with the details of "How are we going to pay for this?" They want to first expand on the idea to see if it is possible and *then* focus on implementation.

We can see how managing projects on a team with these different styles might contribute to a lack of trust. The overarching lesson of this stage is to understand that Sensing and Intuitive types *need* each other to create sound project management strategies, and that the more diverse a team is, the higher the quality of the outcome of its decisions will be. Trust results from being willing to lean into the discomfort and take a risk to share an idea, some personal information, or a story that allows others to get a sense of who we are and what we stand for.

Lencioni's model suggests that doing a personal history exercise or a team effectiveness exercise can also enhance trust. When using the MBTI tool, participants can share what they think they bring to the table and one thing they could improve on or eliminate for the betterment of the team.

Stage Two: Mastering Conflict

In order to master conflict people first have to identify how they feel about it. This is where the MBTI instrument contributes. Our preference for Thinking or Feeling directly correlates to how comfortable we are with conflict and whether we seek it out or avoid it. Part of understanding how to move through conflict involves managing the discomfort and pushing one another to talk about and confront the elephant in the room. Lencioni also suggests using the *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* to examine the different conflict-handling modes people use in addition to the Thinking or Feeling preference.

To move through the discomfort of a conflict on a team, it is important to recognize the conflict as an opportunity for productivity. Trust must be established, as described in Stage One, so that people will allow themselves to challenge and push one another in the moment. This includes staying in a difficult moment rather than retreating or avoiding it. Depending on our preference for Thinking or Feeling, we can recognize and then flex our style for self-development during conflict. People with a Thinking preference may have a tendency to appear more competitive during conflict, which reflects a desire to win rather than resolve what is happening. People with a Feeling preference may experience people with a Thinking preference as tenacious, combative, cold, critical, and distant at times when they are in the heat of an argument. At the same time, people with a Thinking preference may experience people with a Feeling preference as avoidant, weak, wishy-washy, sensitive, or needy. People with a Feeling preference need to feel connected before they can take risks and challenge others. The risk of losing the relationship exists as a real threat to them and at times may keep them from saying what they really think or feel.

The chart on page 5 details what people with Thinking and Feeling preferences need to do to stretch themselves during conflict. It is imperative that the leader of the team be ready to jumpstart conflict and "fan the flames" during a discussion. According to Lencioni, a lack of conflict makes meetings boring. Using the MBTI instrument to understand conflict styles allows the facilitator to see what Thinking types and Feeling types need to engage in team conflict more comfortably and productively.

Stage Three: Achieving Commitment

Lencioni says this stage can be accomplished when people have the ability to defy a lack of team consensus. People want their ideas to be heard, understood, and considered, as discussed in Stage Two. It is imperative at Stage Three to clarify the action that will be taken by the team. By avoiding assumptions and ambiguity, teams will make more critical and sounder decisions. Lencioni also believes that clarity plus buy-in equals commitment, and that any decision is better than no decision. People can examine their Judging and Perceiving preferences to help them with this stage. Part of what contributes to individuals' decision-making style is their outlook on how they organize themselves in the world. If they have a "just in time" mentality rather than a "do it now" mentality, this can create tension on a team where project management is key. Often people with different J–P styles assign value and judgment unjustly to the work styles of their teammates.

MBTI® Preference	What a Person Needs to Engage in Conflict with You
Thinking	• A willing participant in dialogue • A sense of your competence • Confidence that you come prepared to debate with facts • Permission to challenge you • To not feel responsible for your feelings • A desire to look at the problem logically • A willingness to talk it out even when it gets hot • Accurate information • To not be demonized or blamed solely • To know that when the conflict is over it will truly be over
Feeling	• To know that you are interested in him or her as a person • To know that you will consider his or her feelings • To know that it is not all about winning • To be heard and considered • A sense of having a relationship with you • A sense that you are in this together no matter what • Patience for people to collect their feelings if things are heated • Belief that things can and will get better • An effort to make everyone happy (at least initially) • To feel connected to you in some way

What we have to constantly remind ourselves of in using the MBTI tool for project management is that whether a person stays up all night to complete a project or finishes it with days to spare, *the quality of the work is the same. The difference is the road the person took to get there.*

Sometimes in corporate America people equate timeliness with quality rather than process. This can be a drastic mistake. For people with a Perceiving preference, it is the pressure of the deadline that is motivating. For people with a Judging preference, the satisfaction of completing the project is the payoff. This is the difference between the J's joy of closure and the P's joy of process—but the quality of the results is the same! People can sometimes misconstrue a Perceiving type's resistance to a deadline as avoidance, but it may be that the individual needs more information or processing time to buy in. In contrast, a person with a Judging preference may buy in too early, without having all the information that is necessary to make a sound decision. The desire for closure may override his or her better judgment. What becomes important at this stage is communication about a commitment to action: what needs to be done by whom and when. Furthermore, coming up with a back-up plan for worst-case scenarios can also provide comfort and a higher level of buy-in from all team members. One way to practice this is to make smaller decisions that present less of a risk to the team. This gives people an opportunity to experiment with the impact of

MBTI® preference	What a Person Needs to Achieve Commitment
Judging	• To not be viewed as rigid or obsessive • To not have the discussion open too long • A plan of action that will be followed • A back-up plan "just in case" an alternative is necessary • Evidence that the process of getting to the decision was sound • A list with checkpoints to check progress along the way • Designated people with pieces of the project each can own • Respect for his or her attachment to time and deadlines • To have everyone honor a deadline once it is agreed on • The joy of knowing the project will be complete and productive
Perceiving	• Room to experiment with ideas and feel them out along the way • Permission to take a circuitous route rather than a direct line to results • The space to not feel judged while collecting information • To not have his or her style viewed as a character flaw • The possibility of achieving "flow" during the process • Belief that the plans are open to change with new information • Knowledge that decisions may not be absolutely final • Ample time to explore or research alternate pathways to outcome • To not feel rushed to decide without all appropriate information • Flexibility and spontaneity—padded deadlines and understanding of his or her style

their type and flexing their style, as well as an experience of what coming to a team decision feels like. The chart above provides some insight into what Judging types and Perceiving types need to guide them closer to buy-in and commitment.

Stage Four: Embracing Accountability

Being accountable means answering for things you have and have not done, and explaining the outcome. Lencioni explains that peer pressure from teammates can be motivating. In fact, if people hold back what they really feel from one another, it is a disservice to their teammates. If people have to answer for their progress sooner rather than later, a project can move along at a much faster and more efficient pace. Thus it is important that individuals overcome whatever hesitation they may have regarding providing critical feedback to other team members. This means leaning into that uncomfortable spot again and seeking the opportunity for development that lives there. People can use their J or P and S or N preferences and attach them to being accountable in this stage. If the team publishes goals and standards, they will be available to help everyone be on the same page and understand what the outcome should look like. With regular, scheduled progress reviews, the team members can stay on track and not drift off into the daily challenges of their

MBTI® Preference	What a Person Needs to Stay Energized and Embrace Accountability
Extraversion	• Direct contact with other people on the team • Immediate feedback around ideas. • Acknowledgment that you heard what he or she said • Space to brainstorm and discuss with others openly • Permission to think and speak simultaneously even if the final thought is worthless • Respect for his or her process of fast-paced thinking • An effort to stay with him or her even if thoughts seem tangential • The ability to bounce back and forth between ideas • An environment in which checking in is essential and required • Public recognition of accomplishments to date on the team
Introversion	• Time alone to reflect on what he or she thinks is the best strategy • To receive all necessary information before meetings so he or she can process • Permission to participate in preferred medium (e-mail/voice mail) as long as ideas are shared • To be brought into the meeting by being asked direct questions. • Time to process ideas • The understanding that he or she may change his or her mind after having more time to process • Respect for his or her internal process as a path to sharing external thoughts and ideas • The opportunity to meet with people on the team one-on-one to fortify thoughts • Private recognition of his or her accomplishments on the team to date • Acknowledgment that his or her silence or lack of a comment does not mean agreement

roles. Finally, rewarding the team members for their accomplishments is an important element of this stage. Without team rewards people will lose their motivation to continue, especially if the project is difficult or complicated. The question of energy also enters the picture. People need energy to sustain their motivation, both individually and on the team. Given that this is the fourth stage, teams sometimes feel a sense of accomplishment by this time and can rest on their laurels or become complacent. This can lead to letting things go in a way that instantly undoes the progress that has been made. Staying energized and accountable is an imperative motivator in this stage. We can look at Extraversion and Introversion as a way to answer the question, "Where do I get my energy, or what refuels me?" The chart above demonstrates some ways team members can keep one another engaged in and motivated during the process. By understanding the differences between and values of the Extraverted and Introverted styles, the team can keep its momentum going and reach a strong finish in the final stage.

Stage Five: Focusing on Results

At this stage it is critical that people be able to see the team as a whole in addition to their individual contributions to it. When people solely pursue their individual interests, the team identity is lost and conflict reemerges as a challenge to the team's outcomes and productivity. Lencioni discusses team versus individual status as a reminder of how important team type can be during a project. Understanding the roles people play and what they bring to the team is valuable, but putting individual needs aside for the greater good of the project is what makes a team exceptional. Once a team has completed a project, the public declaration of results is as important as results-based rewards. Otherwise, people carry their experience into the next project, and this in turn affects their ability to stay motivated.

We can examine driving motivators by looking at styles and MBTI function pairs. Each function pair carries with it a unique motivational style, whether it belongs to an individual or a team. The chart on page 9 describes driving motivators that will help the team members focus on results in a way that allows them to grow and learn from their differences as well as appreciate their solidarity.

CONCLUSION

Even if another instrument has been used within the company previously, adding these elements of the MBTI instrument can greatly enhance the way in which differences are understood, communicated, and accepted by team members. We can see how using knowledge of the preferences at each stage of Lencioni's model makes the world bigger, in that people are encouraged to step outside their comfort zone and experiment with stretching their behaviors appropriately to suit the team and the desired outcome.

Function Pair	Motivation for Results
ST	• Focusing on facts as they relate to ideas • Striving for efficiency • Being interested in how things will get done • Concern about how much it will cost • Focus on the bottom line • Desire for things to be precise and exact • Desire for a practical result • Desire to do it right the first time • Desire to stick to the task at hand ahead of the relationships
SF	• Focus on facts as they relate to people • Commitment to strong client service • Striving to help others • Desire to know who will be affected • Interest in data that relate to people • Ability to ease tension on the team while working together • Keeping knowledge current as it relates to people • Appreciation from others for his or her preciseness • Follow-through from other team members on his or her ideas
NT	• Interest in possibilities in ideas • Striving for mastery • Interest in theoretical concepts • Asking about strategy and relevance • Concern about principles • Focus on systems • Expecting competence from teammates • Analysis of what the results mean • Action orientation
NF	• Focus on possibilities in people • Striving for empowerment • Interest in ideals and values • Concern about growth and development • Focus on giving encouragement • Need to understand what his or her relationship is with you • Desire for inclusion with others • Need for people to be tactful • Enthusiasm for his or her contributions

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