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Human Dynamics

How Dysfunctional is Our Team?

By Scott Byorum

There is a lot of trouble at banks lately. The focus may be on financials and solvency, but the stress of it affects peoples' lives daily and it can turn a great environment into a caustic one. By focusing on the root cause, banks can engage with their employees to create a work environment that is dynamic, thriving, and reassuring to the reason banks even exist at all: The Customers.

Now more than ever is the time to gauge How Dysfunctional is Our Team? The following is a simple survey and process that anyone can employ, even on a personal level, which gets down to the core reasons why a bank team might not be functioning well.

There are two temperatures to measure. The first is how team members perceive the functioning of their team as a whole:

Dysfunctional Team	Measure	Functional Team
Has boring meetings	1 2 3 4 5	Has lively interesting meetings
Creates environments where back channel politics and personal attacks thrive	1 2 3 4 5	Extracts and exploits all ideas of all team members
Ignores controversial topics that are critical to a team's success	1 2 3 4 5	Solves real problems quickly
Fails to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members	1 2 3 4 5	Minimizes politics
Wastes time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management	1 2 3 4 5	Puts critical topics on the table for discussion

The second temperature to measure is the trust level that team members have with each other:

Distrusting Member	Measure	Trusting Member
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I conceal my weaknesses and mistakes from others	1 2 3 4 5	I admit weaknesses and mistakes
I hesitate to ask for help	1 2 3 4 5	I ask for help
I hesitate to ask for help outside my own areas of responsibility	1 2 3 4 5	I accept questions and input about my areas of responsibility
I hesitate to give or ask for constructive feedback	1 2 3 4 5	I take risks in offering feedback and assistance
I jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of others without attempting to clarify them	1 2 3 4 5	I give others the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a negative conclusion
I fail to recognize and tap into another's skills and experiences	1 2 3 4 5	I appreciate and tap into another's skills and experience
I waste time and energy managing my behavior for effect	1 2 3 4 5	I focus time and energy on important issues, not politics
I hold grudges	1 2 3 4 5	I offer and accept apologies without hesitation
I dread meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time with other members	1 2 3 4 5	I look forward to meetings and other opportunities to work as a group

If you are interested in scoring the survey, simple math will give you some numbers to play around with (i.e. the team survey total is $25 \times \#$ of participants; the trust survey total is $45 \times \#$ of participants). You can add up the respondent points and divide them by their totals to get a percentage. There are a number of ways to play with the numbers.

But what you should be looking for is where the respondent points are falling. That is what you should be addressing and dealing with. A few outliers can be addressed in individual one-on-one meetings. But the only way to address strong indicators by significant portions of respondents is through team discussion.

This survey is not an answer. It is a tool to start a discussion with your team on areas of weakness and inefficiency. It should be conducted anonymously and without retribution. And be prepared to talk about the real issues that it reveals in an open and candid discussion. A functional team can at least do that.

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