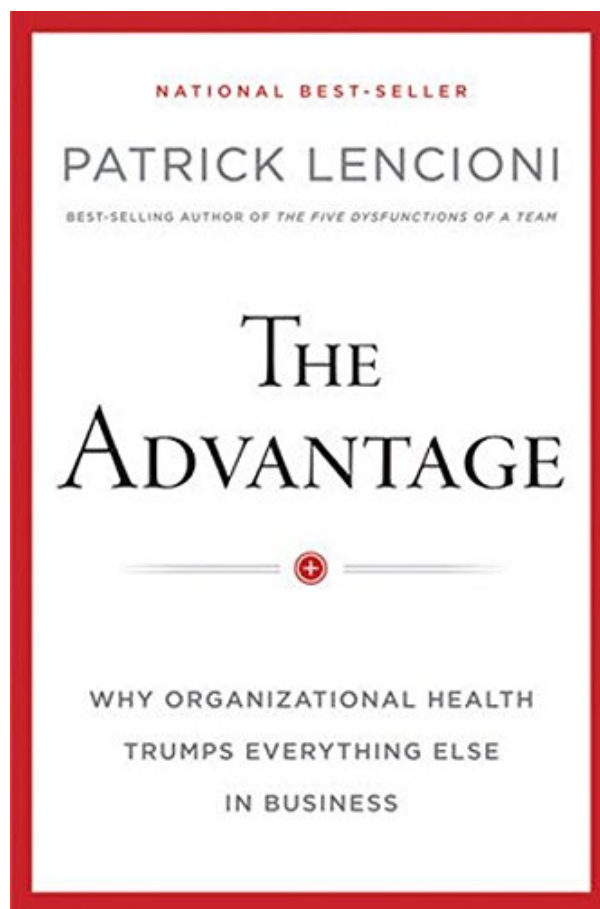


**THE ADVANTAGE: WHY
ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH TRUMPS
EVERYTHING ELSE IN BUSINESS BY
PATRICK M. LENCIONI**



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NATIONAL BEST-SELLER

PATRICK LENCIONI

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM*

THE ADVANTAGE



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There is a competitive advantage out there, arguably more powerful than any other. Is it superior strategy? Faster innovation? Smarter employees? No, New York Times best-selling author, Patrick Lencioni, argues that the seminal difference between successful companies and mediocre ones has little to do with what they know and how smart they are and more to do with how healthy they are. In this book, Lencioni brings together his vast experience and many of the themes cultivated in his other best-selling books and delivers a first: a cohesive and comprehensive exploration of the unique advantage organizational health provides.

Simply put, an organization is healthy when it is whole, consistent and complete, when its management, operations and culture are unified. Healthy organizations outperform their counterparts, are free of politics and confusion and provide an environment where star performers never want to leave. Lencioni's first non-fiction book provides leaders with a groundbreaking, approachable model for achieving organizational health—complete with stories, tips and anecdotes from his experiences consulting to some of the nation's leading organizations. In this age of informational ubiquity and nano-second change, it is no longer enough to build a competitive advantage based on intelligence alone. The Advantage provides a foundational construct for conducting business in a new way—one that maximizes human potential and aligns the organization around a common set of principles.

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- Published on: 2012-03-13
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Most helpful customer reviews

63 of 65 people found the following review helpful.

The Advantage to The Advantage

By Paul Sanders

The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business

By Patrick Lencioni

Patrick Lencioni is a proven master of the business fable--a short story that provides a lesson that can be applied to the business world. His numerous bestsellers, "*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*," "*Death by Meeting*," and "*Silos, Politics and Turf Wars*," among others, each focus on providing the reader with a lesson on a particular business topic.

In his latest book, "*The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*," Lencioni pulls together the many separate themes of his previous works and weaves them into a comprehensive business theory. And despite his expertise as a storyteller, in this book he chooses not to use the business fable.

Perhaps the fable format is not extensive enough to meet his needs. Whatever the reason, the insight and strength of this book prove that he made the right choice. The result is first-rate writing that supports discerning insights about the essential factors for business success.

The opening line in the first chapter captures the premise of the book, "The single greatest advantage any

company can achieve is organizational health. Yet it is ignored by most leaders even though it is simple, free, and available to everyone who wants it."

Organizational health is readily accessible, the author argues, but most organizations choose to be smart rather than healthy. Smart may include a great marketing plan and cutting edge technology. It focuses on "tweaking the dials," in these and other areas, rather than on overall health of the organization. Studying spreadsheets and financial statements is relatively safe, Lencioni suggests, unlike the messier, unpredictable ways of establishing the health of the organization.

The healthy organization is the victim of three strong biases: The Sophistication Bias (organizations often ignore that which is simple and straightforward); The Adrenaline Bias (most leaders suffer from chronic adrenaline addiction, the stress rush of fighting fires every day); and The Quantification Bias (the difficulty of measuring it in financial terms).

Lencioni suggests there may be a fourth reason for such bias: no one has ever presented it as a simple, integrated discipline. In doing so for the first time, the author believes that it is the practice that will surpass all other disciplines in creating competitive advantage.

This foremost advantage, organizational health, is about integrity, Lencioni says. Integrity in this context is defined as an organization that is whole, consistent and complete, "when its management, operations, strategy, and culture fit together and make sense."

Health can be recognized by reading the signs within an organization that include, minimal politics, low confusion, strong morale, high productivity and very low turnover.

The author suggests an organization becomes healthy in much the same way as a couple builds a strong marriage or family--"it's a messy process." It involves doing several things at once.

He outlines four disciplines to do this:

- * Discipline 1: Build a Cohesive Team. The leaders of any group, whether a church, school, or international corporation must build trust, master conflict, achieve commitment, embrace accountability and focus on results. "Teamwork is not a virtue," Lencioni says. "It's a choice."

- * Discipline 2: Create Clarity. Six questions help to clarify, including, "why do we exist? What do we do? Who does what? "What is new is the realization that none of them can be addressed in isolation; they must be answered together," the author says. "Failing to achieve alignment around any one of them can prevent an organization from attaining the level of clarity necessary to become healthy."

- * Discipline 3: Overcommunicate Clarity. Clearly, repeatedly and enthusiastically give the answers created to help clarify. There is no such thing as too much communication.

- * Discipline 4: Reinforce Clarity. Critical systems must be implemented to reinforce clarity in every process. Every policy and program should be designed to remind employees what is really important.

The book also contains practical structures gathered from Lencioni's previous books. For effective communications, for example, a healthy organization deals in daily check-ins, weekly tactical staff meetings, monthly strategic meetings, and offsite meetings.

The author's enthusiasm is more than compelling; it is contagious. "Is this model foolproof?" he asks about the healthy organization. "Pretty much," is the response. If leaders are aligned around a common set of answers, communicate those answers repeatedly, put effective processes into place that reinforce them--they effectively "create an environment in which success is almost impossible to prevent. Really."

That would indeed be a healthy organization.

63 of 70 people found the following review helpful.

The Four Disciplines of Healthy Organizations

By Al Mayer

I first discovered Patrick Lencioni via a moving foreword that he wrote for another great business book called Emotional Intelligence 2.0.

Since then I've read everything that Lencioni has put out and this book may very well be his best book yet. For those of you who love the parable style, be warned this book is not a parable. However, that's what makes it even better than the rest.

Lencioni is bursting with wisdom, and that means all 240 pages are overflowing with great ideas for how to run a company well. It's refreshing for him to just come right out and say it, and what he has to say is both brilliant and practical. The book teaches the four disciplines in great detail (enough that you learn just how to apply each in your organization). You can literally read the book as a group and get started making your company healthy.

The four disciplines are:

DISCIPLINE 1: BUILD A COHESIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

An organization simply cannot be healthy if the people who are chartered with running it are not behaviorally cohesive in five fundamental ways. In any kind of organization, from a corporation to a department within that corporation, from a small company, to a church or school, dysfunction and lack of cohesion at the top inevitably lead to a lack of health throughout.

DISCIPLINE 2: CREATE CLARITY

In addition to being cohesive, the leadership team of a healthy organization must be intellectually aligned and committed to the same answers to six simple but critical questions.

DISCIPLINE 3: OVERCOMMUNICATE CLARITY

Once a leadership team has established behavioral cohesion and created clarity around the answers to those questions, it must then communicate those answers to employees clearly, repeatedly, enthusiastically, and repeatedly (not a typo). There is no such thing as too much communication.

DISCIPLINE 4: REINFORCE CLARITY

In order for an organization to remain healthy over time, its leaders must establish a few, critical nonbureaucratic systems to reinforce clarity in every process that involves people. Every policy, every program, every activity should be designed to remind employees what is really most important.

This book is a five star business book. Give it a read. You won't be disappointed.

49 of 54 people found the following review helpful.

Even a Moron Like Me Can Do This

By Cole Brown

I am a church planter. That means I started an organization that didn't exist and have spent the past six years trying to lead it toward fulfillment of its mission.

During this process we have seen a significant measure of success and also a significant measure of frustration. The success is solely due to God's grace. The frustration is largely due to the fact that though I

know how to start a healthy organization I don't know how to keep that organization healthy as it grows and changes.

Or at least I didn't.

Until I read this book.

Lencioni argues that the key to success in any organization is organizational health. He does so persuasively. But far more importantly, he walks his readers through a process in which we can assess the health of our own organization and take steps to improve it. We have put Lencioni's questions and exercises to use and have seen noteworthy progress in each of the key areas of health Lencioni names.

I imagine this book would be helpful for any leader. But for a leader, like myself, who is not naturally gifted in creating and sustaining organizational health it was beyond helpful. It was a lifeline.

[...]

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