Brief Summary of
The Ideal Team Player
How to recognize and cultivate the three essential virtues
A Leadership Fable by **Patrick Lencioni**

- "The right people" are the ones who have three virtues in common – humility, hunger and people smarts.

Humility

- Great team players lack excessive ego or concerns about status.
- They are quick to point out the contributions of others and slow to seek attention for their own
- They share credit, emphasize team over self, and define success collectively rather than individually
- There are two types of people who lack humility:
    a. The overtly arrogant people who make everything about them, the classical ego driven type which diminishes team work
    b. The others are those who lack self-confidence who discount their own talents and contributions, so others mistakenly see them as humble.

- "Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less" - C S Lewis

Hungry

- Hungry people are always looking for more – more things to do, more to learn, more responsibility to take on.
- They never have to be pushed by a manager to work harder as they are self-motivated and diligent.
- They are constantly thinking about the next step and the next opportunity.
- Hunger, here refers to one of a healthy kind – a manageable and sustainable commitment in doing a job well and going above and beyond when it is truly required

Smart

- Smarts refers to a person's common sense about people.
- Smart people tend to know what is happening in a group situation and how to deal with others in a most effective way.
- They ask good questions, listen to what others are saying and stay engaged in conversations intently.
- Smart people have good judgement and intuition around the subtleties of group dynamics and the impact of their words or action.

- What makes humble, hungry and smart powerful and unique is not the individual attributes themselves, but the required combination of all three. If anyone is missing

in a team member, team work becomes significantly more difficult and sometimes not possible.

The Ideal Team Player model

- When team members are adequately strong in each of these areas, when they possess significant humility, hunger and people smarts, they enable team work by making it relatively easy for members to overcome the five dysfunctions of a team.
- They are more likely to be vulnerable and build trust, engage in productive abut uncomfortable conflict, commit to group decisions even if they initially disagree, hold their peers accountable when they see performance gaps and put the results of the team ahead of their own needs
- Those who lack all three qualities have little chance of being valuable team members. It would take great effort over long period of time for them to develop the capacity for all three, let alone two or even one.

Humble Only – The Pawn

a. People who are only humble, but not at all hungry or smart are the "pawns" on a team.
b. They are pleasant, kind hearted unassuming people who just don't feel a great need to get things done and don't have the ability to build effective relationships with colleagues.
c. They often get left out of conversations and activites and have little impact on the performance of a team.
d. Pawns don't make waves, so they can survive quite a long time on teams that value harmony and don't demand performance.

Hungry Only – The Bulldozer

a. These people will be determined to get things done, but with a focus on their own interests and with no understanding or concern for how their actions impact others.
b. Bulldozers are quick destroyers of teams
c. In organizations that place a premium on production alone bulldozers can thrive and go uncorrected for long periods of times.

Smart only – The Charmer

a. People who are smart, but sorely lacking in humility and hunger are "charmers"
b. They can be entertaining and even likeable for a while, but have little interest in the long-termwell-being of the team.
c. Their social skills can sometimes help them survive longer than bulldozers or pawns, but often their contributions to the teams are negligible, they often wear out their welcome quickly.

Humble and Hungry, but not Smart – The Accidental Mess maker

    a.   They genuinely want to serve the team and are not interested in getting a disproportionate amount of credit and attention.

    b.   However, their lack of understanding of how their words are actions are received by others in the team will lead to interpersonal problems.

    c.   While colleagues will respect their work ethic and sincere desire to be helpful, those colleagues can get tired of having to clean up the emotional and inter personal problems that this group often leaves behind.

    d.   Accidental Mess Makers have no bad intentions and can usually take corrective feedback in good humor

Humble and Smart, but not Hungry – The Lovable Slacker

    a.   They aren't looking for undeserved attention, and they are adept at working with and caring about colleagues

    b.   Unfortunately, they tend to do only as much as they are asked and rarely seek to take on more work or volunteer for extra assignments

    c.   They have limited passion for the work the team is doing

    d.   Lovable slackers need significant motivation and oversight, making them a drag on the team's performance, more so than accidental mess makers.

Hungry and smart, but not Humble – The Skillful Politician

    a.   These people are cleverly ambitious and willing to work extremely hard, but only in as much as it will benefit them personally.

    b.   Because they are smart, skillful politicians, they are adept in portraying themselves as being humble, making it hard for leaders to identify them and address their destructive behaviors.

    c.   By the time the leader sees what's going on, the politician may have created a trail of destruction among their more humble colleagues.

Humble, Hungry and Smart - The Ideal Team Player

    a.   Ideal team players possess adequate measures of humility, hunger and people smarts.

    b.   They have little ego when it comes to needing attention or credit for their contributions, and they are comfortable sharing their accolades.

    c.   Ideal team players work with a sense of energy, passion and personal responsibility, taking on whatever they possibly can for the good of the team.

    d.   They do and say the right things to help team mates feel appreciated, understood and included even when difficult situations arise that require tough love.

Applications

- There are four primary applications of the ideal team player model within an organization – hiring, assessing current employees, developing employees who are lacking in one or more of the virtues, and embedding the model into an organization' culture.

1. Hiring

- The most reliable way to ensure team work takes hold in an organization would to be to hire only ideal team players.
- Some of the ways to improve the interview process are
    a. Not being too generic
    b. Debrief each interview as a team
    c. Consider group interviews
    d. Make interviews non-traditional
    e. Ask questions more than once
    f. Ask what others would say
    g. Ask candidates to do some real work
    h. Don't ignore hunches
    i. Scare people with sincerity

- Here are a few questions that can help you get at the essence of humble, hungry and smart

- Humble
    a. Tell me about the most important accomplishments of your career
    b. What was the most embarrassing moment in your career? Or the biggest failure?
    c. How did you handle that embarrassment of failure?
    d. What is your greatest weakness?
    e. How do you handle apologies, either giving or accepting them?
    f. Tell me someone who is better than you in an area that really matters to you
- Hungry
    a. What is the hardest job you have ever worked on something in your life?
    b. What do you like to do when you are not working?
    c. Did you work hard when you were a teenager?
    d. What kind of hours do you generally work?
    e.
- Smart
    a. How would you describe your personality?
    b. What do you do that others in your personal life might find annoying?
    c. What kind of people annoy you the most, and how do you deal with them?
    d. Would your former colleagues describe you as an empathic person? Or can you can give me an example of how you have demonstrated empathy to a team mate?

2. Assessing current employees

- Another important application of the ideal team player is the evaluation of current employees
- There are three outcomes of this evaluation
    a. Confirming that the employee is an ideal team player
    b. Helping the employee improve and become one
    c. Deciding to move the employee out
- There will be situations where a leader is struggling with an employee, and the assessment can be used to identify the source of the struggle – a lack of humility, hunger or smarts
- There are a number of questions managers can ask themselves about a given employee to determine whether he or she is humble, hungry or smart

Humble

- Does he genuinely compliment or praise team mates without hesitation?
- Does she easily admit when she makes a mistake?
- Is he willing to take on lower level work for the good of the team
- Does she gladly share credit for team accomplishments?
- Does he readily acknowledge his weakness?
- Does she offer or receive apologies graciously?

Hungry

- Does he have to do more than what is required in his own job?
- Does she have passion for the "mission" of the team?
- Does he feel a sense of personal responsibility for the overall success of the team?
- Is she willing to contribute to and think about work outside of office hours?
- Is he willing and eager to take on tedious and challenging tasks when necessary?
- Does she look for opportunities to contribute outside of her areas of responsibility

Smart

- Does he seem to know what his team mates are feeling during meetings and interactions?
- Does he show empathy to others on the team?
- Does he demonstrate an interest in the lives of team mates?
- Is she an attentive listener?
- Is he aware of how his words and actions impact others on the team?
- Is she good at adjusting her behavior and style to fit the nature of a conversation or relationship?

Employee Self-Assessment – the most effective way to assess employees is often to ask them to evaluate themselves

- The best way to allow employees to do self-assessments is to give them explicit questions to consider, and phrase those questions in ways that encourage honesty.
- A good team player must not only have the right attitude, but must demonstrate the right behaviors in a way that others see and understand.

3. Developing Employees who are lacking in one of more of these virtues

- Once a leader has established a clear sense of his employee's relative strengths and weaknesses related to these three virtues, the process of improvement can begin.
- The leader's commitment in constantly reminding the employee, even if unpleasant, is important in this process.
- When the manager steps up the challenge, one of two things would happen – either the employee strives to improve and achieves the breakthrough or he/she might decide to leave the organization. A third possible outcome could be the person sticks on to the organization without making the necessary behavioral changes – in which case he/she might have to be forcibly asked to go.

Developing Humility

- Humility is one of the most sensitive of the three virtues, which is why the process of improving in this area is often the most psychologically nuanced.
- Lack of humility is often related to a feeling of insecurity which is rooted in childhood.
- Sometimes the cause of struggle with humility or with other virtues can be traced back to employee's personality type. Using the Myers Briggs or the DISC profiles it is possible to predict people who might have a higher likelihood of having humility problems.
- Another way to develop these virtues is to have the employee make a list of desired behaviors related to their area of development and then track their own actions over a period of time.

Developing Hunger

- Hunger is the least sensitive and nuanced of these three virtues – also the hardest to change.
- Developing hunger is transforming the employee so that he can ultimately come to embody the idea of going above and beyond and no longer need extra prodding or reminding.
- Lacking hunger can actually be a desired characteristic for some people. Plenty of people who lack hunger would like to be fully engaged and more productive in their work.
- Some people prefer a sense of detachment and routineness and pouring into them is not going to yield significant returns.
- One of the ways of helping the person become hungry is to connect him/her to the importance of the work being done (the "Why")
- Another way of developing hunger is to set clear behavioral expectations and hold them accountable for those expectations.

Developing Smarts

- The key to helping someone become smarter is to make it clear that a deficiency in this area is not about intention.

- Employees who lack people smarts have no desire to create interpersonal problems with their team mates.
- A person who has trouble being smart with people can be likened to a pet. Like a puppy being trained, he needs to be quickly and lovingly rapped when he does something non-smart.
- If we want to create a culture of humility, hunger and smarts, the best way to do it is to constantly be catching people exhibiting those virtues and publicly holding them up as examples.

4. Embedding the model into an organization's culture
- If we want to create a culture of humility, hunger and smarts, the best way to do it is to constantly be catching people exhibiting those virtues and publicly holding them up as examples.
- Similarly, whenever you see a behavior that violates one of the values, take the time to let the violator know that his behavior is out of line.
- The key is that leaders and team mates don't squander opportunities for constructive learning.
- Great cultures tend to be appropriately intolerant of certain behaviors and great teams should be quick and tactful in addressing any lack of humility, hunger of people smarts.

Appendix
Employee Self-Assessment

Instructions: Use the scale below to indicate how each statement applies to your actions on the team. Respond as honestly as possible as this will allow you to most accurately identify any ideas of development that you may have

Scale: 3 – Usually, 2 – Sometimes, 1 – Rarely

Humble

My team mates would say
- ---------- I compliment or praise them without hesitation
- ---------- I easily admit to mistakes
- ---------- I am willing to take on lower level work for the good of the team
- ---------- I gladly share credit for team accomplishments
- ---------- I readily acknowledge my weaknesses
- ---------- I offer and accept apologies quickly

Hungry

My team mates would say
- ---------- I do more than what is required in my own job
- ---------- I have passion for the "mission" of the team
- ---------- I feel a sense of personal responsibility for the overall success of the team

    ----------- I am willing to contribute to andthink about work outside of office hours
    ----------- I am willing to take on tedious or challenging tasks whenever necessary
    ----------- I look for opportunities to contribute outside of my area of responsibility

Smart

My team mates would say
    ----------- I generally understand what others are feeling during meetings or conversations
    ----------- I show empathy to others in the team
    ----------- I demonstrate an interest in the lives of my team mates
    ----------- I am an attentive listener
    ----------- I am aware of how my words and actions impact others on the team
    ----------- I adjust my behavior and style to fit the nature of a conversation or relationship

Scoring – A score of over 18 would mean that the virtue is a potential strength

16-14 is an indication that you most likely have some work to do around that virtue to become an ideal team player

A score of 13 or lower is an indication that you need improvement around that virtue to become an ideal team player.

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