

ASSEMBLING AN EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIVE TEAM



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One of the key messages for SSAs and CTARcs, is that for any collaboration or shared service arrangement to be implemented successfully there are two components: 'the deal' and 'the relationship'. Both need to be worked at.

Often the deal (business case) is given the most attention whereas in our experience it is commonly inattention to the relationship that causes collaborations to fail.

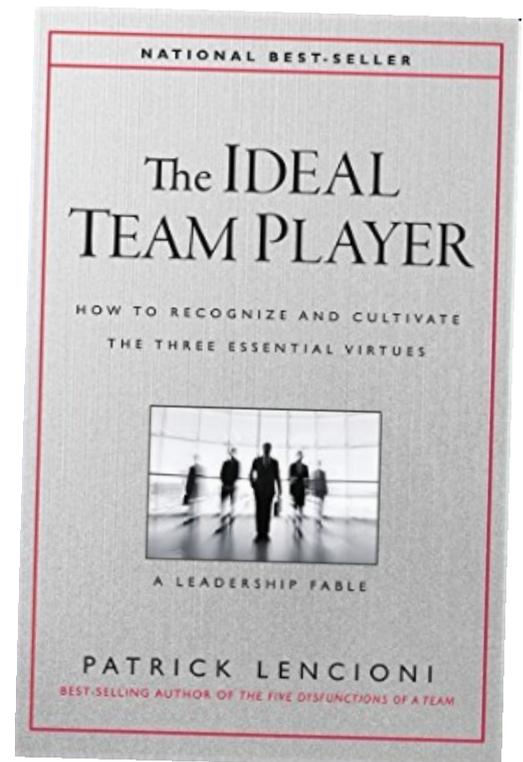
I find myself regularly considering what are the qualities of those persons who develop and form those great relationships which enable effective collaboration. If you are pondering the same question, I would recommend the newly published book from Patrick Lencioni, *The Ideal Team Player*. It will be very helpful in stimulating thought.

As I was reading, it caused me to reflect on situations where his ideas supported exactly what I had witnessed in working with teams assembled to implement a shared service or to work across organisations on a wicked issue. Things both positive and negative.

Patrick Lencioni is an author and speaker who also runs a small US based consultancy. His best known book is *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. I'm sure many SSA graduates will have read this.

In his new book, *The Ideal Team Player*, I believe you will find assistance in identifying those people who you want as part of any collaboration team.

The style of all Lencioni's books that I've read is a little unusual in that they begin with a fictional story from which his ideas are developed. Some won't like this approach and if that's you it's possible to go straight to the second part of the book.



The three virtues...

Lencioni's conviction is that there are three virtues that ideal team players have in common: humility, hunger and being smart.

Humble people are those without excessive egos and concerns about their status.

As Lencioni says "they are quick to point out the contributions of others and slow to seek attention for their own. They share credit, emphasise team over self, and define success collectively rather than individually".

He says that humility is the single greatest and most indispensable attribute of being a team player. In the public sector we regularly read articles informing us that collaborative leadership skills are a necessary strength for the modern chief officer.

In his new book, "The Ideal Team Player" I believe you will find assistance in identifying those people who you want as part of any collaboration team.

When organisations assemble a team for developing a shared service, or other collaborative project, I am amazed at how often little thought is given to the selection of people for the team.

However, when recruiting senior staff have our methods evolved to support this, or are we still recruiting chief officers with big egos and a sense of self importance? My observation would be that in collaboration across organisations, the egos of leaders are still a stumbling point.

Hungry people refers to an attitude of always seeking more. Not more possessions or personal wealth but more learning, more responsibility, more opportunities.

These are people who are self-starters, self-motivated and diligent. They go above and beyond what is expected of them but don't take this to an extreme. It's a healthy hunger!

Smart people has nothing to do with intelligence or knowledge and is best described as "people" smart.

Lencioni describes someone who has high emotional intelligence (EI). The ability to be interpersonally appropriate and aware. Someone who is in touch with what is going on in the group and can relate to people effectively. Good at asking questions and listening.

All three virtues seem straightforward and not earth shattering. He says that what makes them unique is the required combination of all three. "Even if one is missing, teamwork (*collaborative working*) becomes significantly more difficult."

The bulldozer, the charmer and the politician...

The book describes the issues associated with individuals who are lacking in one or more of the virtues.

For example the person who is hungry only is described as "the bulldozer" and the one who is smart only as "the charmer".

Similarly for combinations of only two of the virtues, for example the person who is hungry and smart but not humble is "the skilful politician". The dangers and disruptions that each will cause in collaborative work are described.

Lencioni's suggested applications of the model are fourfold:

- when hiring staff
- when assessing current employees (including self-assessment),
- when developing employees who are lacking in one or more of the virtues
- when embedding the model into an organisation's culture.

...and I would suggest a fifth which is 'Team Selection for Collaborative Projects'.

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Ask the senior managers what are their priorities and shared services will often feature, but this sense of priority is not then reflected in the people they select for teams.

Selection is often based on who's available or will cause least disruption to day to day working.

I would suggest that attention to the message of this book when selecting staff for collaborative projects would go a long way towards ensuring their success.

The *Ideal Team Player* is published by Jossey-Bass and is available through the usual outlets including Kindle.