

## Author Q & A Pat Lencioni - *Silos, Politics and Turf Wars*

**Q: Tell us about your background Pat: How did you go from being an amateur screenwriter to authoring half a dozen bestselling business books that use a format at which so many people have tried and failed?**

A: I've always had a passion for writing, but didn't think I'd ever put it to use in my career. Another passion of mine was group dynamics and management. When I started my career as a strategy consultant, I found myself drawn to the human issues that often presented strategies from taking root. One day I came up with a theory based on my observations of various CEOs, and after being encouraged by clients to write a book, I decided to do a fiction story that allowed me to bring about my ideas through dialogue and plot development. I thought that readers would learn more if they were drawn into a compelling story. When my first book, *The Five Temptations of a CEO*, was published and readers validated my leadership theory, I was elated. When they reported that they couldn't put the book down because of the characters, it was like icing on the cake.

**Q: So, your goal in using fictional characters to tackle real life problems was to draw the reader in? Is the appetite for this especially high right now?**

A: I think that people today are more distracted than ever. Cell phones, the internet, endless television options all contribute to this. People are looking for something that captures their attention and provides an enjoyable experience. Even still, if the content doesn't resonate with them, it won't matter.

**Q: *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* has been your most successful book to date and is being used by a very wide array of groups -- from churches to coaches. Tell us why that book has such universal appeal.**

A: I think the universal appeal of the book is due to the fact that it addresses some fundamental and powerful aspects of human behavior. Almost everyone can relate to the difficulty of being on a dysfunctional team, and they're hungry for practical solutions—which is what the book provides. And though I wrote it for a business or corporate audience, it was apparent early on that the principles applied elsewhere. Churches. Schools. Athletic teams. Even families.

**Q: Why SILOS in this new book? Office politics and employee conflict have always been around. Is there something happening in business today that makes this problem particularly acute?**

A: I think the silo problem—departments within the same company working against one another—

has existed since the beginning of organizational life. However, in a world where there is more competition than ever, for customers and employees alike, the need for eliminating frustration and waste is heightened. And because competitive advantages in intellectual property and strategy are harder and harder to maintain, cultural differentiation has become even more powerful. The organization that can break down internal barriers will create a clear advantage over their more political and dysfunctional rivals.

**Q: What's the answer to eliminating SILOS and getting everyone to work together?**

A: Like so many other aspects of life, the answer to this question is remarkably simple yet difficult to master on an ongoing basis. The key to eliminating silos is simply to provide a compelling context for colleagues to understand that they should be rowing in the same direction. While leaders have been focusing on punishing negative behaviors that lead to internal conflict, they have often failed to give people a clear understanding of what they have in common, and why serving the common good is better for them than looking out for number one.

**Q: So, the challenge is really one for company leaders to tackle. They need to create the environment and offer employees the right direction and action to make this problem go away?**

A: Yes, it starts at the top of any organization, whether that is a large company, a small entrepreneurial venture, or a department within a corporation. The leaders need to provide the context and content for rallying people around a common goal, and then get out of the way. Ironically, by doing so, they drastically decrease the need for them to over-manage their people behaviorally.

**Q: Do today's company leaders have it tougher than earlier generations? The workforce has changed so dramatically in the last fifty years, with workers rarely staying with one company for their entire career and perhaps not having the same loyalty people did years ago. Is that making the situation worse?**

A: Yes. The situation is more difficult today because employees have more choices. Keeping good people is more important than ever. However, more than pay or perks or benefits, it is the feeling of being on a strong team and working toward a shared purpose that keeps the best people in an organization. What drives them away is having to spend too much of their time fighting with colleagues and working against internal challenges.

**Q: You spend the bulk of your time speaking to groups and working with companies and organizations. What do you find most interesting when you're on the ground seeing first hand what goes on inside of organizations?**

A: I think the aspect of my work that intrigues me the most is the universality of how human beings deal with one another. Whether I'm working for a Fortune 100 company or a start-up or a church, the causes of dysfunction and the desire for greater clarity and cohesiveness is the same. It's really

unbelievable.

**Q: If readers take away a single message from SILOS, what would you like that to be?**

A: People want to work together. Really. They hate infighting and politics, even more than the leaders do. By providing the context for working together, and holding people accountable for doing so, leaders have an opportunity like no other. Happier employees. Happier customers. Higher profits. Lower turnover. It's a powerful concept, requiring less intellectual and technical ability, and more courage and persistence than anything else.