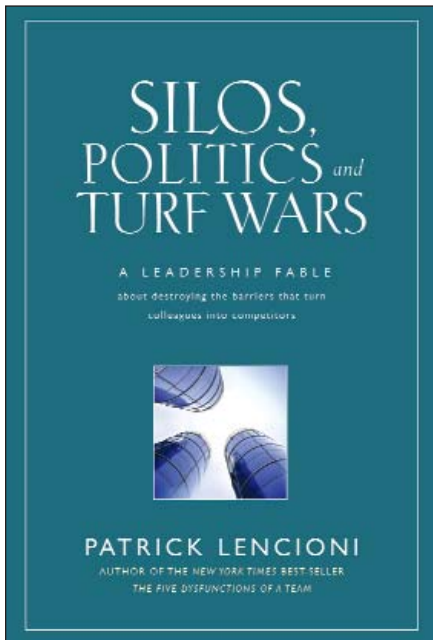


Healthy Competition?



Silos, Politics and Turf Wars: A Leadership Fable About Destroying the Barriers that Turn Colleagues into Competitors

By Patrick Lencioni
Reviewed by Nicole Wright Dalton



The grass isn't always greener on the other side. But sometimes, we are forced to explore it, even if that field is across the country. And according to bestselling author Patrick Lencioni, we do it mostly to get away from the stress of office politics and competitive co-workers.

In his newest book about surviving in the workplace, *Silos, Politics and Turf Wars*, Lencioni weaves a story punctuated with ambitions, failures, successes, and real-life situations that teaches readers how to destroy workplace demons.

In the first portion of the book, Lencioni introduces and defines his premise as well

as his notion of silos as it relates to the workplace. (He uses silos to describe departmental politics and territoriality within organizations.)

According to Lencioni, silos destroy organizations by wasting resources, killing productivity, and jeopardizing goals. They cause "frustration, stress and disillusionment by forcing employees to fight bloody unwinnable battles with people who should be their teammates," he writes. "There is perhaps no greater cause of professional anxiety and exasperation—not to mention turnover—than employees having to fight with people in their own organization."

Executives in companies the author has worked with don't understand the roots of this problem and consequently develop a "well-intentioned but ill-advised series of actions—training programs, memos, and posters—designed to inspire people to work better together."

Unfortunately, when employees want to get rid of the turf-war tension, they are unable to do so without the help of the organization's leaders. That results in continued employee conflicts and dissatisfaction. Worse, most executives don't recognize the problem until their most talented employees start leaving in droves.

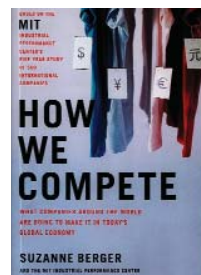
Following the introduction segment, Lencioni delves into a fable about Jude Cousins and his experiences as he makes the transition from a successful marketing vice president in a large corporation to a self-employed consultant specializing in workplace culture. Lencioni describes in great detail Jude's trials and tribulations as he makes his journey from the corporate world to entrepreneur to corporate advisor. After some initial success, readers see him stumble, fall, and give up. Then, a reality check and some encouragement from his pregnant wife help him regain his determination to make his consulting business thrive again. And in the end, he helps his clients learn how to identify and overcome the silos that exist in their organizations.

Working Hurdles

New books discuss issues of corporate culture and competition, generational gaps, and trust.

How We Compete: What Companies Around the World Are Doing to Make It in Today's Global Economy

By Suzanne Berger
(Currency Doubleday, January 2006, \$27.50)



Should Americans fear the surging global economy and its ability to wipe out thousands of jobs in the United States? Maybe. That's the message in *How*

We Compete.

Based on a multiyear, large-scale analysis by social scientists and engineers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, author Suzanne Berger takes the reader through the findings of the study, with examples that indicate that layoffs and falling wages may not be just the result of globalization.

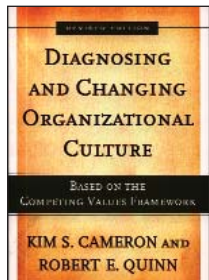
Berger and MIT's Industrial Performance Center suggest that there may be options for American companies, and that they need not give in to assumptions about the dynamics of globalization.

Berger suggests that the tacit information collected in one industrial area, or within the walls of an individual company, is powerful. "The accumulation of such experience over time in centers of high productivity and innovation leads to the crystallization of tacit, informal knowledge in particular localities."

—Rex Davenport

Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture

By Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn
(Jossey-Bass, December 2005
revised edition, \$40)



As many as three quarters of downsizing, strategic planning, reengineering, and quality management efforts either fail or create problems serious enough to threaten the survival of the organization. Why? The authors believe that an overall neglect of the organization's culture is the culprit.

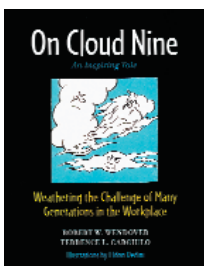
Designed "not to offer one more panacea for coping with our turbulent times or to introduce another management fad," *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture* is geared toward managers, teachers, consultants, and change agents. It provides a framework, a "sensemaking tool," systematic steps, and a methodology for helping organizations adapt to a changing environment.

Cameron and Quinn's observations of organizational failures motivated them to write the book. They claim to "focus less on the right answers" and more on "the methods and mechanisms available to help managers change the most fundamental elements of their organizations."

—Josephine Rossi

On Cloud Nine: Weathering the Challenge of Many Generations in the Workplace

By Robert Wendover
and Terrence Gargiulo
(AMACOM, November 2005, \$19.95)



Here's one more book to add to the plethora of office fables plaguing the business publishing industry. This time, it's about dealing with the challenges that arise when different

generations try to work together.

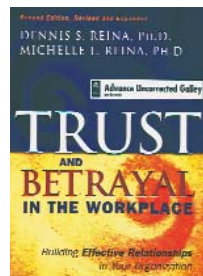
As readers might guess, the book uses weather metaphors and imagery to talk about the varying ideas and opinions between old and young workers. It features Wally, the director of the Weather Customer Satisfaction Bureau, who struggles to quell the "storm" that ultimately threatens his customers. And along with his story are neatly composed illustrations that give the book a *Harold and the Purple Crayon* feel.

The second portion of the book offers readers guidance for improving teamwork among multigenerational staffs. The authors also address commonly debated topics relating to generational labels such as technology usage, job satisfaction, and work ethics.

—Josephine Rossi

Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace Building Effective Relationships in Your Organization

By Dennis S. Reina and Michelle L. Reina
(Berrett-Koehler Publishers, January 2006
second edition, \$16.95)



Collectively drawing on 30 years of research and experience with organizations around the world, the authors outline a common language to discuss trust constructively, identify

specific behaviors that build and break trust, and describe steps for rebuilding trust and sustaining it over time.

Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace helps readers see the natural role trust and betrayal plays in our lives, how they can rebuild trust, and how it transforms workplace relationships. It provides practical tips, tools, and exercises to help them create work environments where trust grows.

The authors, principals of the consulting and research firm Chagnon & Reina Associates, have conducted research for more than 100 organizations.

—Paula Ketter

As I read the fable, I thought Lencioni could have shortened his description and not included every nuance of Jude's story without sacrificing meaning. While there are valuable pieces of information that the reader can glean from the fable, it's a bit drawn out and makes the pace of the book very slow. Furthermore, by omitting some of the personal narrative about the Cousins and their children, he could pull together the lessons in a more succinct manner.

I'm sure that readers may identify with Jude's personality and some of his situations, but some scenarios may merely frustrate them. One example of this occurs about one quarter of the way through the book when Jude is frustrated and downtrodden after experiencing both success and failure. He finally decides to ask his customers what they need from him, which apparently is a novel concept for the protagonist. Conducting an analysis of current and desired states is one of the most elementary steps of problem solving (along with defining goals and objectives for the project). Knowing that, I put the book down, thinking, "How naïve, anyone who would read this book knows that's one of the first things you would do!"

Later, Jude finally discusses goals, objectives, and communication plans with his customers. He shows them a scorecard approach for determining focus that uses green (on track), yellow (not quite there) and red (definitely not where they need to be) indicators. That, too, is nothing new or exciting: Individuals and businesses use that approach daily to ensure that they stay on track to be successful.

Through Jude, Lencioni portrays a character that was once successful in the corporate world, but has had trouble achieving the same level of success on his own. He is, at first, woefully inadequate as a consultant, yet he tries hard to overcome his weaknesses. As the plot progresses, I began to feel hopeful for Jude and his career as he coaches clients on the basic principles of problem solving, thematic goals, defining objectives, and standard operating objectives, and then asks them,

“Why wait for a crisis...(before you do anything)?”

At the end of the book, Lencioni again tells readers that silos exist, and he blames those at the top for their creation. However, he also reminds us that executives don't understand why their companies have inter-departmental conflicts and why the most qualified people leave. He reiterates the importance of goals, objectives, and managing around the organization's thematic goal, and he also provides information about metrics and some additional examples for identifying thematic goals and objectives.

In my opinion, that entire last section should have been at the front of the book, followed by a condensed version of the fable as an example of what organizations can do to avoid and overcome silos. Organized that way, the book would be more engaging and readers would have a better understanding of the theoretical context on which it is based.

Silos, Politics & Turf Wars provides food for thought about overcoming tough issues in the workplace. I give the book two and a half cups of coffee based on the issues mentioned, and I encourage employees to give it to their executive leadership team as an information source if their organizations have no processes in place for defining goals, objectives, and communication plans, and maintaining focus. If nothing else, it may make their leaders ask the question, “What's a silo?”

Silos, Politics and Turf Wars; A Leadership Fable About Destroying the Barriers that Turn Colleagues into Competitors, by Patrick Lencioni.
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