



Book Summary:

The Five Temptations of a CEO *A Leadership Fable*

By Patrick Lencioni ISBN: 0-7879-4433-5

The greatest challenge of being a CEO, or any other leader for that matter, is to avoid getting trapped by the daily complexities and details of our “business.” In this book, Lencioni outlines the five behaviours we must learn to embrace if we are to rise above this challenge.

The Premise: These behaviours are difficult to master not because they are complicated but because each presents us with a corresponding temptation, a natural tendency toward human frailty. Oddly enough, Lencioni makes the point that some of these temptations may not seem like frailties at all in our personal lives, but in our roles as leaders, the temptations are poison.

The book is written as a leadership fable from which Lencioni, very elegantly, outlines a Model which outlines the 5 temptations and the specific steps we can take to overcome them. It also includes a self assessment.

The 5 Temptations

Temptation #1: Choosing Status over Results

The most important principle that an executive must embrace is a desire to produce results. As obvious as this sounds, it is not universally practiced by the highest ranking executives in many companies. Many CEOs put something ahead of results on their list of priorities, and it represents the most dangerous of all the temptations: the desire to protect the status of their career.

Temptation #2: Choosing Popularity over Accountability

Even CEOs who resist the temptation to over focus on protecting their status sometimes fail. Why? Because they do not hold their direct reports accountable for delivering on the commitments that drive results. This happens because they succumb to a different temptation: the desire to be popular.

Temptation #3: Choosing Certainty over Clarity

Even CEOs who resist the temptation to protect their status and to be popular with their direct reports sometimes fail. Why? Because even if they are *willing* to hold their direct reports accountable, they are often reluctant to do so because they don't think it's fair. That's because they haven't made it clear what those direct reports are accountable for doing. Why don't they make these things clear? Because they give in to yet another temptation: the need to make “correct” decisions, to achieve certainty.

Temptation #4: Choosing Harmony over Conflict

Even CEOs who resist the temptation to protect their status, to be popular with their direct reports, and to make correct decisions sometimes fail because they don't feel comfortable with the decisions they make. That's because they haven't benefited from the best sources of information that are always available to them: their direct reports. Why not? Because they give in to the next temptation: the desire for harmony.

Temptation #5: Choosing Invulnerability over Trust

Even CEOs who resist the temptation to protect their status, to be popular with their direct reports, to make correct decisions, and to create harmony sometime fail. Why? Because even though they are willing to cultivate productive conflict, their people may not be willing to do so. Why not? Because the CEO gives in to the final temptation: the desire for invulnerability.

Overcoming The 5 Temptations

Temptation #1: Choosing Status over Results

Make results the most important measure of personal success, or step down from the job. The future of the company you lead is too important for customers, employees, and stockholders to hold it hostage to your ego.

Temptation #2: Choosing Popularity over Accountability

Work for the long-term respect of your direct reports, not for their affection. Don't view them as a support group, but as key employees who must deliver on their commitments if the company is to produce predictable results. And remember, your people aren't going to like you anyway if they ultimately fail.

Temptation #3: Choosing Certainty over Clarity

Make clarity more important than accuracy. Remember that your people will learn more if you take decisive action than if you always wait for more information. And if the decisions you make in the spirit of creating clarity turn out to be wrong when more information becomes available, change plans and explain why. It is your job to risk being wrong. The only real cost to you of being wrong is loss of pride. The cost to your company of not taking the risk of being wrong is paralysis.

Temptation #4: Choosing Harmony over Conflict

Tolerate discord. Encourage your direct reports to air their ideological differences, and with passion. Tumultuous meetings are often signs of progress. Tame ones are often signs of leaving important issues of the table. Guard against personal attacks, but not to the point of stifling important interchanges of ideas.

Temptation #5: Choosing Invulnerability over Trust

Actively encourage your people to challenge your ideas. Trust them with your reputation and your ego. As a CEO, this is the greatest level of trust that you can give. They will return it with respect and honesty, and with a desire to be vulnerable among their peers.

Patrick Lencioni is president of the Table Group, a San Francisco Bay Area management consulting firm, and author of the best-seller *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive* and *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. In addition to his work as an executive coach and consultant, Pat is a sought-after speaker. Pat began his career at Bain & Company and has held key positions at Sybase and Oracle. Over the years, Pat has worked with hundreds of executive teams and CEO's – all victims, at one time or another, of the five temptations.

Pat lives with his wife, Laura, and their twin boys, Matthew and Connor, in the San Francisco Bay Area. You can reach him at the Table Group's website, www.tablegroup.com.

Carlos