



# Is Your Church Healthy?

By Greg Wiens

I have attempted to bring churches to health for over 25 years and finally I have found an author who really understands the difference between being “smart” in ministry and being “healthy” in ministry. What's more, he didn't even write it with the church specifically in mind. That author is Patrick Lencioni and the book is *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*. In this book, he delineates the difference between an organization being smart and healthy.

I have read a number of Lencioni's books and have always found them helpful. So many of his previous books were narrative in nature, meant to illustrate his principles. However, Lencioni says that this latest book is the compendium of all that he has learned through his 20 years of working with CEO's of organizations, making it much more instructional.

For starters, Lencioni makes the argument that for decades, the need to be a “smart” organization has been paramount, meaning strategic planning, market analysis, financial forecasts, research and development, systems, and structure were held as priority. These concepts are quite objective and have therefore been parsed and analyzed ad infinitum. These subjects have been dealt with so thoroughly that most organizations have gotten the most they can out of them, making many of them very similar, equipped with their spreadsheets and Gantt charts.

To be sure, smartness should be maintained within an organization to ensure it is operationally sound, but the real difference-maker in both the author's experience and my own is an organization's health. The concept of organizational health is much less concrete, so it is largely unaddressed both from leadership and in academia. The relative underexposure of organizational health should not downplay its importance, because if an organization is healthy, it will inevitably get smarter over time. Lencioni says, “... People in a healthy organization, beginning with the leaders, learn from one another, identify critical issues, and recover quickly from mistakes.”

Interestingly, the opposite of that statement is not true. Organizations that are really smart don't necessarily get healthy. In fact, if organizations pride themselves on being smart, they often find it difficult to acknowledge when they make mistakes or have any flaws and thereby are not able to learn from their peers, which is one of the primary signs of health. On the contrary, healthy organizations are able to tap into all of the smartness throughout the organization because people are willing to admit what they don't know and everyone is willing to help others. In this sense, the smartness of a healthy organization is a compounding factor of all on the team, where the smartness of an unhealthy organization is limited to how smart individuals who make the decisions are.

Lencioni does offer a model of a healthy organization. He doesn't ignore the significant cultural shift that is required for a company to embrace and practice these four disciplines on a continual basis. However, it is possible for most organizations to become healthy and make a significant impact not only in their market place but also in the lives of all of those who work in that organization.

## The four disciplines are:

### **Discipline 1: Build a Cohesive Leadership Team**

This team is not just a work group that operates together, but it must share ownership of goals, outcomes and struggles. A lack of health in this team will inevitably create a lack of health in the entire organization, church or family.

### **Discipline 2: Create Clarity**

In addition to being cohesive, there must be alignment and commitment to six questions:

1. Why do we exist?
2. How do we behave?
3. What do we do?
4. How will we succeed?
5. What is most important, right now?
6. Who must do what?

### **Discipline 3: Overcommunicate Clarity**

The answers to the preceding questions must be communicated clearly, repeatedly, again and again with excitement and passion. There is no such thing as communicating too much.

### **Discipline 4: Reinforce Clarity**

Health can be fleeting. So to ensure that health continues to be exemplified through the life of an organization, church or family, a few simple, non-bureaucratic systems must be developed. As it says in the book, "Every policy, every program, every activity should be designed to remind employees what is really most important."

Throughout the book, Lencioni gives practical and seasoned advice on how to implement specific steps of health in your organizations.

I was amazed at how easily the concepts of this book translate to the church. Leaders continue to ask me to help them be smarter with preaching, marketing, web presence, children's ministry, outreach, small groups, worship and the like. They hire staff and fire staff in an attempt to be smarter at ministry. However, the health of a church is far more of a dominant factor in its ability to reproduce healthy disciples of lost people than any smart programs.

Healthy leadership teams will produce significant impact for the Kingdom of God because they capitalize on each other's strengths and intelligence. They do this in a way that actually multiplies the intelligence of the ministry. How "good" any one person is no longer the

limiting factor, because a healthy team creates synergy across all ministries of the church. Ironically healthy people are attracted to the culture created by a healthy church. As they come to know Christ, their walk with Him is catapulted through discipleship, rather than stunted as it is in other churches.

This book should be required reading for anyone who expects to lead a church that is healthy, transformative and significant in the Kingdom of God.

*FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GREG WIENS, PLEASE VISIT [WWW.LEADERSTHATLAST.ORG](http://WWW.LEADERSTHATLAST.ORG)*