

SILOS, POLITICS and TURF WARS

By Patrick Lencioni

Introduction

1. Silos—and the turf wars they enable—devastate organizations. They waste resources, kill productivity, and jeopardize the achievement of goals.
2. They exact a considerable human toll. They cause frustration, stress, and disillusionment by forcing employees to fight bloody, unwinnable battles with people who should be their teammates.
3. Eliminate silos and bring about a sense of alignment and sanity.

Key Concepts/Ideas

1. Create a crisis...a sense of urgency...which can create alignment, focus, & unity.
2. The power of crisis. Emergency room illustration.
3. When things are going too smoothly (or perceived as such), people tend to turn inward. (complacency—rc).
4. A crisis has as much power to tear an organization apart, even create thicker silos, as it does to tear the silos down and unite people. It depends on what the executive team does with it.
5. Teams often perform at their best when their backs are up against a wall. Why not create the same kind of momentum and clarity and sense of shared purpose that you'd have if you were on the verge of going out of business?
6. What is the single most important accomplishment that this team needs to make in the next six or nine months?
7. What is it that you need to be focused on for the good of the entire organization regardless of your departmental role?

Components of the Model

1. **THEMATIC GOAL**—A single, qualitative focus that is shared by the entire leadership team—and ultimately, by the entire organization—and that applies for only a specified time period.
 - It is not a long-term vision or a BHAG, but rather something in between.
 - **Single:**
 - There can only be one thematic goal in a given period.
 - Every organization needs a top priority.
 - When a company is tempted—and most always are—to throw in one or two extra top priorities, they defeat the purpose of the thematic goal, which is to provide clarity around whatever is truly *most* important.
 - This is best summarized by the wonderfully simple adage, “If everything is important, then nothing is.”
 - Something has to be most important.
 - **Qualitative**
 - The thematic goal is not a number, and it is not even specifically measurable. It is a general statement of a desired accomplishment.

- It requires a verb, because it rallies people to *do* something: *Improve, reduce, increase, grow, change, establish, eliminate, accelerate.*
- Metrics come later.
- **Time-Bound**
 - The thematic goal does not live beyond a fixed time period.
 - Usually between 3-12 months.
 - Something particularly important during that time period.
- **Shared**
 - The thematic goal applies to everyone on the leadership team, regardless of their area of expertise or interest.
 - All team members take responsibility for the goal.
 - This means that department heads must remove their departmental hats and replace them with generic ones that say “leader.”

A thematic goal is a single, temporary, and qualitative rallying cry shared by all members of the leadership team.

But a thematic goal, on its own, will leave an organization confused about what exactly to do. And that’s where defining objectives come into play.

2. **DEFINING OBJECTIVES**—Key components or building blocks that serve to clarify exactly what is meant by the thematic goal. They are qualitative and shared across the entire team.

- **Qualitative**—Executives are often tempted to overquantify defining objectives because it gives them a sense of closure and certainty, especially after struggling with the notion that the thematic goal was not quantified.
- **Shared**—It is critical that all leaders assume a very real sense of accountability and responsibility for achieving it.
- **Time-bound**—When the thematic goal is no longer valid, the defining objectives also change.

The temporary, qualitative components of the thematic goal; shared by all members of the leadership team (and usually varying in number from 4-6).

3. **STANDARD OPERATING OBJECTIVES**—These are the ongoing objectives that don’t go away from period to period.

- Standard operating objectives often include topics like revenue and expenses, as well as other items like customer satisfaction, productivity, market share, quality, and the like.

The ongoing priorities of the organization; shared by all members of the leadership team (and usually varying in number from 4-6).

4. **METRICS**—Once the thematic goal, defining objectives, and standard operating objectives have been established, a leadership team can now start talking about measurement.

- Numbers, dates.

Follow-up Ideas:

1. Weekly staff meetings use a real-time agenda--no pre-set agenda. (Pros and cons).
 - a. First go around the table and give every member of the team 30 seconds to report on their 3 top priorities for the coming week.
 - b. Then review your team scorecard. (Which is a to-be-graded list of the items that make up the defining objectives and the standard operating objectives.) (Green, yellow, red).
2. Peer accountability about how team members are prioritizing their precious time and resources is key to an organization's ability to focus, and it is the thematic goal that provides the context for doing this.
3. Get everyone involved in prioritizing and accomplishing the thematic goal. (eg. "SG's")
4. The key to eliminating silos is to drive
 - a **thematic goal** with a
 - **clear scorecard** that includes
 - **defining objectives** and
 - **standard operating objectives**.
5. When a thematic goal runs its course and is largely accomplished, an organization must then come up with another, and then another.
6. Weekly metrics, within the context of the larger picture thematic goal, is crucial.
7. Thematic goals tie all together. Without it, the BHAG's lose connection to day-to-day activities, and weekly metrics become arbitrary and lifeless numbers that seem to serve no purpose other than their own.

Illustration: Case Study #4 (page 193):

Situation: Attendance at weekly services is up. Weekly offerings are growing. More people are joining the congregation.

Thematic Goal: Expand to meet demand.

Defining Objectives: Add more Sunday services; Expand facilities; Offer more educational programs; Increase outreach; Grow the church staff

Time Frame: One year

Standard Operating Measures: Maintain attendance growth; Manage finances; Increase number of people served; Achieve member satisfaction targets