

Pave the Way to Trust

A Message You Can Lead On

By: Honey Shelton

There has never been a time when the importance of demonstrating trust has been more crucial. Trust is the foundation of all successful interpersonal relationships, both personal and business. Trust is the confidence or belief a person feels toward a particular person or group. Trust is, therefore, one of the primary binding forces in any interpersonal relationship. It permits people to overcome doubts and unknowns and enjoy peace of mind. You can't turn on the news or pick up the paper that the financial service industry isn't under scrutiny. Restoring faith and trust in the industry is everyone's job.

The absence of trust causes confusion, worry, inaction, and fear. When interpersonal trust is present, a person feels a confidence that everything will somehow work out. In the workplace, trust is a prerequisite for effective interpersonal communications. Without trust, employees may feel uncertainty, worry, and a sense of insecurity. No relationship, personal or business, can exist for even a short period of time if some element of trust is not present. Trust is an essential leadership training ingredient that binds any human relationship into an effective, working partnership.

Research suggests that trusting relationships are *predictable, caring, and faithful*. When a leader's behavior is consistent over a period of time and another person can reasonably predict that behavior, trust is possible. By contrast, it is difficult to trust a person whose actions are inconsistent or unpredictable.

Building trust in the workplace is vital for a long-lasting, satisfying, rewarding, and successful relationship. Leaders do this with consistent actions each day. In return they obtain the benefits of high-trust employee relations. These benefits include higher morale, increased initiative, improved honesty, and better productivity. All are important aspects of a profitable and rewarding business experience.

It's not uncommon for people to use the word "trust" to describe a feeling they have regarding some interpersonal relationships. Trust does not magically appear in a relationship without certain elements preceding it over time. And once trust has been breached it is difficult and sometimes impossible to establish once again.

Steps that Pave the Way to Trust

Step One Effective Communications

It takes more than desire to be an effective communicator. Listening intently and learning to make your point sincerely and with clarity are key behaviors of highly effective communicators.

Step Two Check for Understanding

Watch out for assuming someone agrees or understands. Ask and check for understanding. Be cautious of sending emails or leaving voice mail when you are too mad, too sad or too excited.

Step Three Mutual Respect

A trustworthy relationship demands that each person act respectfully. Be aware of any behavior on your part that could be viewed as disrespectful. Ask yourself if you might be guilty of intruding on someone's time by scheduling meetings or appointments that don't start and stop on time. Talking about someone behind their back or failing to keep commitments are examples of acting disrespectfully.

Step Four Integrity

Integrity is not only keeping agreements, but it is also "walking the talk." Integrity is not only about honesty it is about ethical conduct and fairness. Leaders integrity is on the line every day.

Five Trust Builders

1. Promise only when you are positive
2. When you don't have an answer, say so ...then get one!
3. Tell the truth, as much as you can, as fast as you can
4. Don't say one thing and mean another - be it!
5. When you ask for feedback, circle back.

1. Promise only when you are positive.

In Rudy Giuliani's book, *Leadership: Don't make promises unless you know you can do it*. Giuliani states "this rule sounds so obvious that I wouldn't mention it unless I saw leaders break it on a regular basis". He shares the pressure he felt, after the World Trade Center attacks, to tell the country when the airlines would be operational once again. The motives were good - reassure the people that life would get back to normal very soon. However, he resisted the desire to pacify the press until he knew that what he said would actually happen. We, too, need to resist the impulse when pressed for information to release an inaccurate response.

2. When you don't have an answer...say so...then find one.

Perhaps this is another obvious behavior. Lack of confidence is the main culprit when we guess, or fake, an answer rather than admit we do not know. In today's workplace, fear of being perceived as inadequate is understandable. We want to be known as the 'go to' person. No one is going to 'go to' you if you give unreliable answers rather than admitting you don't know. Build trust. Go get that answer. Follow through. Then you'll be the go to person.

3. Share what you can, as soon as you can.

In a leadership position, you might not be able to tell your team everything. Say as much as you can. Deliver the information, even if the statement is "I won't know until tomorrow". Let employees know you are concerned about informing them. This step is half the battle. Then, as soon as you know something, inform rapidly. The longer you wait to communicate, the more time fear has to creep in and fill in the communication void with rumors.

4. Don't say one thing and mean another.

Say what you mean, mean what you say. When you don't go back and clean it up. Do what you tell others to do. Self assess – reflect on your interactions and choices and when you need to self correct. It is very important that you live the values you are articulating, because people can see right through it when you don't.

5. When you ask for feedback, circle back.

If you aren't going to tell me what you did with my feedback, then don't bother asking me. It is very discouraging to be given the impression that your thoughts count, only to find they have disappeared into a giant black hole. Circle back at the next meeting. Or, generate an e-mail to let people know the results of the feedback session. People can accept that their idea was not implemented. It is more important to know that the idea was understood and considered.



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