

The First Law of Building Trust by **Robert T. Whipple MBA, CPLP**

What advice do you give others and yourself on how to build higher levels of trust? We all know trust is a key ingredient for any organization to be successful. In these draconian times, many leaders find the ability to build and maintain trust is next to impossible.

There are countless books and articles on leadership. Many of them focus on the area of building trust. Often these writings focus on what a leader needs to have in order to build trust. For example, one author suggests that a leader must have both credibility and character to garner higher trust. I agree with those two elements, but my focus is on helping leaders change what they do. If you change what you do, then you change who you are, and you get better results.

Of all the trust building skills leaders possess, the ability to **reinforce candor** is the most powerful and elusive. This is the behavior of making people feel glad when they bring up something a leader has done that they feel is not right. Most leaders find it impossible to reinforce people when they offer a candid critique. Reason: Leaders act from their own paradigm of what is right, so when an employee suggests an action is wrong, they get defensive and push back. This has the effect of punishing the employee for being candid.

If we can teach leaders to reinforce people when they speak their truth, those leaders will have a giant head start at building trust. It is not rocket science: it is much more important than rocket science. In my business, I coach leaders every day on how to be more effective. There are a thousand things to think about when trying to lead an organization effectively. These skills range from being consistent to preventing the formation of exclusive cliques or even just how to write an effective e-mail message.

The first skill I work to instill in any leader is the ability to reinforce candor. Why? If leaders gain the ability and humility to accomplish this feat, they will find all the other leadership skills and traits come easily. If they cannot reinforce candor, then the other skills or activities of leadership will be blunted and ineffective.

If you are interested in further information on the power of reinforcing candor and how to accomplish it, you can reference the attached white paper. This is a brief (2 ¼ page) excerpt from my latest book *Leading with Trust is like Sailing Downwind*.

<http://www.leadergrow.com/Reinforce-Candor-It-Builds-Trust-and-Transparency.pdf>

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