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BOB WHIPPLE

Meaning of TRUST

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The acronym has five elements.

By Bob Whipple

Watch - The Key to Building Trust: Reinforcing Candor

Do you trust your sales and service reps? Do they trust you? Do your customers

What is the meaning of trust? You might say, *confidence, character, integrity, or walk the talk*. I find several concepts to be central to the idea of building and maintaining trust. The **TRUST** acronym is a way for me to highlight **five central elements**:

1. Trusting others. When you are not satisfied with the level of trust you see, you need to ask how you can show more trust in others. Trust is a *reciprocal relationship*, and the best way to have people trust you more is to increase your visible trust in them.

When I asked one leader who struggled with trust to sow more trust in his people, he replied, “These people show me by their daily actions that they can’t be trusted to do what is right.” It was a toxic environment. The VP would yell at the people and say, “You are so stupid! I can’t rely on you for anything. I have to watch you like a hawk.” The VP was unaware that he was the real cause of his problem.

If you have people who can’t be trusted on your team and tolerate them, shame on you. Get rid of them. Most workers will do good work if they are treated correctly. When trust is low, you need to do three things: 1) Recognize your own contribution to the problem; 2) modify your behavior to be more trustworthy; and 3) show more trust in your people. Unfortunately, the first step is the most difficult. Many managers are blind to the fact that they are causing their own problem. It’s much easier to blame others. Rebuilding lost trust is arduous, since wounded workers must observe improved behaviors over time.

2. Reinforcing candor. The best enabler of trust is reinforcing candor—refraining from punishing people when they speak their truth. When workers state that a manager is doing things inconsistent with the vision, they take a risk (since most managers punish candor). Brilliant leaders recognize that if they can establish a pattern of making people glad when they bring up difficult issues, it builds trust more than any other single factor. Once leaders understand the power of reinforcing candor, they have an easier time creating and maintaining trust.

3. Universal goals. When trust is low, usually individuals and teams have conflicting goals—they are pulling in different directions. When a team is focused on one set of goals, members are aligned. Many teams struggle with poor alignment. Only a few workers are pulling in the direction of the vision. In high trust organizations, most people are pulling in the direction of the vision. It is easy to see if goals are not universal when you observe silo thinking, conflict, low trust, lack of respect, fear, management abuse, and other ills. To establish a high trust culture, you need complete agreement on the direction and enroll all members to engage their full effort toward that vision.

4. Sincerity. This shows that leaders care about employees. When managers and leaders are duplicitous, people quickly get the idea, because they see a lack of sincerity. The antidote for low sincerity is *The Golden Rule*—if you treat other people the way you would like to be treated, they’ll respond in a positive way because they know you care. Sadly, many leaders put short-term financial performance above caring for their people. Treating people the right way means being alert to the needs of each unique individual and treating him or her as a person who will happily perform well if treated properly.

5. Transparency. Organizations that share information widely about goals, direction, strategies, behaviors, and performance, get the best that people have to offer. Of course, being *totally transparent* may not be wise—you must combine common sense, kindness, ethical behavior, and care when deciding how much information to reveal. But most managers err on the side of too little transparency. Ironically transparency is becoming less of a choice for senior executives due to social networking and the ability for people to get information quickly and easily. When incorrect information gets out in the social networks, aim for maximum transparency and fast response time.

These five concepts—Trusting others, Reinforcing candor, Universal goals, Sincerity, and Transparency—form the acronym **TRUST**. While there are many other concepts and issues around trust and being trustworthy, these five are at the core of creating cultures of high trust. Organizations with higher trust out-perform those with low trust. A high trust group enjoys *two to five times the productivity* of a low trust group. No organization can survive for long with a low-trust culture. Focus efforts on these five concepts, and you will achieve and maintain high trust. **SSE**



Bob Whipple is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals, Building Trust Online, and Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Visit www.Leadergrow.com Email bwhipple@leadergrow.com

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For decades, Bob Whipple has served the leadership field as a referee—one who whistles players for violations of trust and then whips them back into shape. By turning five elements of TRUST into a memorable acronym—Trusting others, Reinforcing candor, Universal goals, Sincerity, and Transparency—he makes the meaning of trust come alive in daily actions and workplace applications. For example, he states: If you have people who can’t be trusted on your team and tolerate them, shame on you—get rid of them. For Bob, building trust as a leader is much more than hobnobbing with employees and clients—it’s a reciprocal relationship. He wisely notes, the best way to have people trust you more is to increase your visible trust in them.



Ken Shelton
Editor since 1984

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