

Successful Supervisor Part 77

Shades of trust

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

I have always thought of trust as a single concept: I either trust you or I do not trust you at any time. It seemed simple enough, but after studying the phenomenon for over 20 years, I have come to realize there are many different flavors of trust with other people that we experience all the time. Since supervisors deal with many different situations and personalities on a daily basis, it is important to not view trust as a single commodity.

For example, you might trust an individual because you know he has your back and will do what is in your best interest. You might trust a person because he is consistent and always does what he says. You might trust another person because the two of you share common values. An important type of trust for leaders is to let people know it is safe for them to tell you what they believe is true without fear of being punished. Trust as it relates to others is a complex set of concepts about your relationships with them. Think of trust as a mosaic or pattern rather than a singular lens.

That pattern changes based on the transactions between you and other people, and since you deal with numerous different people and situations, your experiences with trust will vary all over the map. The types of trust are ever evolving and either gaining or losing strength.

Picture the concept of trust as being like a kaleidoscope with an infinite number of complex designs that change as you move through time. The glass pieces that make up the design are a fixed number, but the mirrors in the kaleidoscope, just like the different categories of trust, make new patterns as you experience changes in your relations with others.

Exercise for you: Today, as you interface with people, try to visualize the different patterns of trust you have with them. Notice how the pattern shifts as the day progresses and transactions occur. Witness the beauty and variety of trust in your relationships. Each transaction has the potential to increase or reduce the trust based on your perception of what is going on.

Understanding that trust is a complex set of interrelated concepts will allow you to experience the richness of your relationships with others. It may become confusing or

frustrating at times, but that is the reality of life. As you see the wonderful patterns of trust unfold in front of your eyes, you will begin to experience the beauty of life and relationships at a higher level. You will also become a more successful supervisor.

This is a part in a series of articles on “Successful Supervision.” The entire series can be viewed on www.leadergrow.com/articles/supervision or on this blog.

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