

Successful Supervisor Part 79

Trust and Solving Problems at Work

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

In his famous video series, “Do Right,” Lou Holtz, the master motivational speaker and football coach said, “One thing I know that’s universal is you are going to have problems.” For supervisors, many days seem like an endless stream of problems to resolve. This article links the solving of problems to the concept of trust.

Solving Problems if Trust is Low

When trust is lacking, problems are more difficult and time consuming to solve for several reasons:

1. Difficult to identify the real problem

When trust is low, people are working around the interpersonal issues, and often the facts are hidden from view. People will protect or hoard information to protect their parochial interests.

You can observe people in lengthy and hot debates where they do not even address the real problem.

2. Solutions are not the most creative

People will not be willing to share their most creative solutions to problems because they are fearful of being ridiculed or ignored. They may only offer what they believe the boss wants to hear.

3. People playing games

Individuals are on guard and actually play head games with each other because they are not convinced the other person’s viewpoints are to be respected. They will put band aids on the symptoms to get out of a tight spot, but not take the opportunity to resolve the root cause.

4. Often problems recur

Since the real problem is often pushed aside, it may return again or even several times because the root cause is still in play. This is particularly discouraging to supervisors because there are not adequate resources to resolve the same problems over and over again.

Solving Problems if Trust is High

When trust is high, solving problems is both quicker and the solutions are more robust for the following reasons:

1. There is full data disclosure

People are not hiding information from each other to protect themselves. They freely share what has been going on so that a real and lasting solution can be invented.

2. People are interested in progress rather than finding a scape goat

With a culture of high trust, people want to get to an excellent resolution as quickly as possible. There is no desire to stretch things out, and there is no need to blame one person or group for the problems.

3. There is pride in solving problems well

High trust groups take real pride in being able to get past problems and enjoy fewer of them in the future. Creative solutions lead to permanent fixes to issues rather than the illusion of progress.

Solving problems if you have a culture of high trust is infinitely better and faster than if you work in a group with low trust. That impacts productivity and morale in a positive way every single day. Make sure to foster a culture of high trust and reap the benefits in your organization.

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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