

Successful Supervisor Part 83

Trust and the Need for Perfection

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

There is a strange phenomenon I discovered while writing my third book, *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*, that sounds backward until you think about it carefully. For any leader, having high trust within the team reduces the need to be perfect. The phenomenon holds for all leaders, especially for supervisors.

Let's dissect the statement in a situation where there is high trust and then contrast it with a low trust situation.

When trust within the group is high

The supervisor does not need to be perfect when trust within her group is high. There are several reasons for this. Here are a few of them.

1. People understand the supervisor's true intent

Because there is high respect for the supervisor, people will be less critical if she speaks or writes something that isn't exactly right. People may point out a gaff but then willingly forgive her when the supervisor apologizes.

2. Nobody is playing games

When trust is high, the environment is real. There is no need to try to out smart each other. The focus is on what we are trying to accomplish together.

3. Communication flows better

In the case of high trust, communication is easier and more believable. People are not kept in the dark wondering what is going to happen, so they have the information they need. If something does not feel right, they will simply ask.

4. Lack of fear

When trust is high, fear is usually very low because people feel secure with the information they are being given. I have a favorite saying: "The absence of fear is the incubator of trust."

When there is low trust within the group

In a condition where trust is lacking, the supervisor had better be perfect at all times because people will be like coiled snakes, ready to strike at the slightest provocation.

1. People react more to gossip and rumors

When there is low trust, the information channels are somehow blocked and the supervisor has a steady diet of trying to beat down rumors. Because trust is low, her denial of a rumor often tends to make it even stronger.

2. People grandstand and publicly humiliate the supervisor

When trust is low, there is limited respect, so workers will get unruly and seek to undermine the supervisor's authority at every opportunity. They may gang up on her in order to further humiliate her.

3. People ignore the rules

All control may be lost, because the workers pay no attention to the rules of department. The supervisor has limited power to keep people under control. This condition can compromise quality and safety.

4. Workers intentionally misinterpret information

In the extreme case, workers will bend the information so that it is not accurate. If the supervisor does not spin every statement to be totally unambiguous, people will frame the information in the worst possible light.

Life for any leader is infinitely more pleasant when working with a group with high trust. Everything works as it should, and small problems are dealt with quickly before they become out of control. If trust is low, it is easy to see how labor relations problems lurk around every situation, and life for the supervisor is truly miserable.

Make life easy for yourself, and do the things required to build a culture of low fear and high trust.

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.

*Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of four books: 1. *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals* (2003), 2. *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online* (2006), 3. *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind* (2009), and 4. *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change* (2014). In addition, he has authored over 500 articles and videos on various topics in leadership and trust. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. For more information, or to bring Bob in to speak at your next event, contact him at www.Leadergrow.com, bwhipple@leadergrow.com or 585.392.7763*

