

Successful Supervisor Part 96

Trust Acts Like a Lubricant For Your Group

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

I have been studying and writing about trust for over 30 years. For supervisors, I thought of an analogy that had not occurred to me before.

Trust acts like a **lubricant** for your group because everything works better and runs more smoothly when trust is present.

I am a mechanical engineer by training, and I know that lubrication lowers the coefficient of friction which allows machines to run better and not overheat.

Let's explore this metaphor for the supervisor role, and see how it applies to your everyday life. Here are six ways trust acts like a lubricant.

1. **Trust makes communication work better**

When people are at odds with one another, they often do a lot of talking but very little deep listening. As the differences of opinion become more apparent, the tone and volume become more heated, just like a shaft would sound if its bearing had gone dry. The scraping and screeching will just get worse until the whole mechanism freezes up.

2. **Trust smooths the roughness**

People are sometimes not very kind to each other. We can be rather egocentric and usually think about what is best for number one. We can become abrasive, like rough sand paper, when other people advocate something that would not be optimal for us. Trust helps fill in the low spots and smooths out the roughness so people can interface with less friction.

3. **Trust helps us find win-win solutions**

When people have a difference of opinion, they often dig in their heels, believing that their perspectives are the correct ones. We all wear a button that says "I AM RIGHT." Trust helps us see that there may be more than one legitimate way to look at an issue, so we have the opportunity to invent creative solutions that work better for both parties.

4. **Trust keeps the temperature down**

A major function of a lubricant is to lower temperature. The reason mechanical parts overheat without oil is that there is no way to dissipate the heat. Oil in a car engine allows the cylinders to continue their momentum without freezing up. Without oil, a car engine would overheat and seize up quickly, thus destroying the engine. With people, trust wicks off the overheating of emotions and allows people to disagree without being disagreeable.

5. Trust polishes relationships

The bond between people will be very strong and supportive when trust is present. Just as lubrication keeps the oxygen away from surfaces that could tarnish or rust, so trust keeps acrimony from destroying the love and affection people have for each other. When trust is high, personal relationships sparkle just like highly polished metal.

6. Trust acts as a preventive

In the stress of everyday pressures, it is easy to become inflamed or at least anxious. Trust is a kind of balm that soothes the nerves and allows people to be calm in stressful situations.

Knowing you have my back gives me more confidence that all will be well. Just as we use grease to prevent stored parts from rusting, we can use trust to keep us well mentally.

For a supervisor, if you can achieve high trust, your entire group is going to run smoothly like a finely crafted machine.

The trust provides all of the wonderful properties of a lubricant. Work to develop higher trust within your group.

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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