

## Trust is a Mirror

by **Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP**



Here is an interesting conundrum. Everyone else on the planet knows how you are coming across to them. The only person who really does not know how you are coming across is yourself. You know how other people are striking you, but you are really blind to what others are thinking about you in the back of their minds.

Of course, you can learn to infer how your actions and words are being received as you listen to others and observe their body language. However, both of those things can disguise what the other person really thinks about you. Would it be valuable to have a way to see yourself clearly as other people do? I think that would be incredibly valuable.

I believe there is a kind of “mirror” that will allow you to see yourself as others do. When you develop a relationship of high trust with another person, you create a mirror where you can accurately know how you are coming across at any point in time. With trust, you will have the blessing of knowing, real-time, when you are coming on too strong, when you are being too pedantic, when you appear uncommitted, when you seem duplicitous, and any number of other maladies.

Why does trust enable this kind of magic feedback that is so powerful? Trust allows other people to feel safe telling you what they are thinking without fear. In normal relationships, people are on guard, because giving direct feedback will often lead to unintended consequences, and that means damage control. Trust allows people to give you feedback with love and care that prevents the need to protect themselves from your reaction.

I believe that trust and fear are incompatible; when you remove the fear between people, trust will grow spontaneously. My favorite quote on this phenomenon is, “The

absence of fear is the incubator of trust.” Once true trust is established, then you have the gift of knowing how you are coming across to other people.

We are all a work in progress. Nobody is perfect as we exist today. In fact, a major part of life is learning and growing. I have always believed that when you stop growing, it is time to order a pine box.

If you believe what I have written thus far, then the obvious question is, “How do I go about building relationships of higher trust?” The answer is as simple as the question. You build trust by creating a safe environment for the person who would share information with you. If, by your past reactions, you have convinced the other person it is safe to share things that may be difficult to say, then you have enabled trust between you and the other person to kindle.

The analysis may sound like circular reasoning, but it has the simplicity and validity of all truly universal laws. When you take a baseball and drop it out of a window, the result is without question due to a law we call gravity. Trust is the same way, if you create an environment where people feel safe sharing difficult messages with you, then you develop trust. That trust means that you will now have the ability to see yourself the way other people do. This knowledge will allow you to take corrective or preventive actions that you would otherwise not even consider.

An additional benefit is that by creating a “real” environment with other people, where you are not playing games, you now have the ability to tell them things that will help them improve. That reciprocal relationship is the basis on which two people can help each other on the journey that is life.

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 600 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](http://www.Leadergrow.com), [bwhipple@leadergrow.com](mailto:bwhipple@leadergrow.com) or 585.392.7763

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