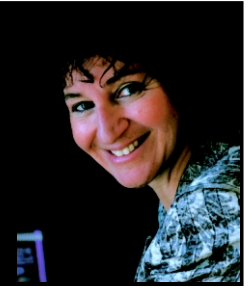


LEADERSHIP INVOLVES BUILDING TRUST

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Trust is the most fundamental need in relationships, whether in our private lives or in the workplace. There are so many simple ways to build trust; but it can be easily broken and lost, sometimes making it impossible to rekindle. When this happens, relationships and work performance deteriorate.

In our current turbulent times, we need a strong trusting environment where our leaders are excellent role models who build trust and commitment among their people. There is much uncertainty around, and companies are continually changing direction to keep up in the competitive business world. Change is healthy but leaders need to ensure trust for a successful future.

Trust in a relationship builds gradually over time. It is the leader's responsibility to initiate a trusting relationship and show his or her dedication to an open and honest workplace to gain maximum productivity and motivation from their employees. I have developed a model - The Four Cs - which is based on four key principles to gaining trust in your organisation or team:

- Communication
- Commitment
- Care
- Consistency

Communication

Every team needs to be open and honest at all times. Trust can be used as a strategic tool. By involving others and sharing visions, you will develop a congruent and empowered team of minds dedicated to the same goal. 'Closed doors' and withholding information can only lead to suspicion, disempowerment and a lack of motivation from the team.

Creating an environment of accepting feedback in a non-defensive manner also symbolises trust. Inviting feedback from others shows consideration for alternative viewpoints, a willingness to utilise the expertise and abilities of others, and a recognition of one's own mistakes and vulnerabilities. A leader needs to value open communication with his or her team so they can work towards common goals.

Commitment

Committed managers and team leaders keep promises - it takes just one broken promise to lose the trust of a team member. And without trust, staff in turn will not be fully committed. Unfortunately our everyday language is filled with potential for broken promises. We are careless and uncommitted when we make statements to our team members like these:

"I'll get back to you soon"

"Why don't we discuss this later in the week?"

"Maybe we can meet some time early next week"

"I'll have a think about this over the weekend and let you know"

These statements show a lack of commitment. A committed leader will build trust when he or she commits to times and dates. A leader shows respect and value for team members by saying, instead:

"I'll get back to you this afternoon, how about we meet at 2pm?"

"Why don't we discuss this on Thursday afternoon, do you want to have a coffee at 3pm?"

"Maybe we can meet early next week, how about Tuesday morning at 8:30?"

"I'll read this over the weekend and call you at 9am on Monday to let you know"

Commitment is about showing dedication to the job, keeping promises, and managing time and priorities.

Care

Leaders who care about their staff build trust. This care is often demonstrated by spending time with each member of the team to learn their needs, share their concerns, and help define their goals. People need to know that there is support nearby if they need it. For example, if you take the trouble to notice that someone is overloaded and offer help, they will be grateful for your concern.

Taking the time to recognise contributions and celebrate good performance is also very much appreciated and motivating. Helping and showing gratitude is a sure way to foster collaboration and trust. It's all about listening for clues and being sensitive to others' needs and interests.

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Consistency

Most people find it unpleasant to work with a leader who is moody - sometimes positive and enthusiastic, then for various reasons they become withdrawn, aggravated or even angry. This is not consistent, positive behaviour. The kind of behaviour we want from any leader is to be a positive role model consistently.

So what does a leader do if he or she is having a bad day? Deal with it and get over it! Talk to someone about it - your manager or a supportive person - or take time off. But do not weigh down the team. They have enough to deal with day to day apart from a moody leader.

People lose trust almost immediately when the leader says one thing but does another. Leaders need to have the same rules for themselves as for others. Many leaders today are encouraging their teams to establish ground rules, a set of agreed behaviours and expectations for everyone to follow. These ground rules ensure professionalism and trust through consistency of behaviour.

Trust should never be taken lightly. In fact, it should be cherished and continually worked on - it's too important to lose.

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