

TO EARN TRUST

It's no secret that trust is a key ingredient of all successful personal and professional relationships. For leaders committed to building high performance teams, without first building trust, it's likely that your best efforts to impact an organization's culture will falter.

In order to build a foundation of trust, specific and intentional actions on a consistent basis are required. While there are numerous actions that can be taken, here are key ones that can be practiced every day. These ten ways of leading can make a dramatic difference in the performance of your people.

1. **Show appreciation frequently.** Saying thank you and other gestures to acknowledge team members can go a long way. Such action demonstrates that you value the individual as a person rather than just simply as a worker. A good rule of thumb is to treat your team members as internal clients or customers. Tom Peters, a renowned business management professor at Stanford University asserts that if you "Take good care of your people, they will take good care of your clients."
2. **Honor your word.** By doing what you say you will do and communicating when you aren't, shows respect. If your team knows that you consistently keep your word on small stuff like appointment times and other deadlines, it's probable that they will trust you to keep your word on larger promises.
3. **Share information as best you can.** Confidentiality is sometimes required in leadership positions. However, when it's not, make sure to contribute information discussed in management meetings that can help your team members do their job better. Again, this shows that you have their best interests in mind along with the interests of the organization. People resent knowledge on a need to know style of management.
4. **Keep your composure.** Staying calm under pressure rather than taking it out accidentally on your team members is a mark of good character. It shows that you're worthy of trust and will not behave inconsistently when circumstances change. As a leader, you are a signal sender.
5. **Provide positive and helpful feedback.** Rather than criticizing the performance of one or more of your team members, focus on providing constructive feedback. This can be a conversation on ways that performance or behavior can be improved. Offer options how you can support their improvement so that your teammates are empowered rather than discouraged.
6. **Tell the truth.** No matter how bad the news may be, being upfront will earn you the respect of your team members. In a survey I conducted with 800 business people, honesty was repeatedly selected as a top quality that people most admired about their bosses. Keep in mind that when it comes to giving feedback on an individual's performance, being honest and specific can make a lasting impression. It tells a person that you can be counted on to present the facts while being specific shows that you are paying attention to them.

7. **Treat everyone on your team fairly.** While there may be certain people that you enjoy interacting with more than others, giving preferences to those people diminishes your credibility to be objective. Make it a point to have conversations with those that you may not know very well and always solicit ideas from everyone. If you do not, there is a likelihood that you could be perceived as playing favorites when it comes to important assignments and promotions.
8. **Express your confidence in your team's capabilities.** Let your people know, and let them know often, that you believe in them. By doing so, you're extending your trust. Avoid micro-managing as much as possible. Your belief will also foster an innate desire for individuals to do well in appreciation of your confidence in their capabilities. People will work to live up to your expectations. In the instances where team members do make mistakes, find ways to support correcting such mistakes without revoking your confidence in them.
9. **Do not criticize others.** Talking about others behind their backs is a quickest way to lose trust. It does not reflect well on you. Follow the Zen guide that our spoken word must be truthful, kind, useful and unifying. While it is a natural desire to vent frustrations about a team member, doing so in the workplace or to those you work with can have disastrous results. You must be mindful at all times, that you are building a team and an action such as talking negatively about others when they are not present can railroad efforts to build trust. And in most instances, your criticism will eventually get back to the person you're talking about.
10. **Be vulnerable.** Humility is the foundation of growth for all great leaders. Allowing yourself to be vulnerable with your team members is a sign of authenticity, which is one of the most attractive leadership qualities to possess. Demonstrating the common bond of humanity fosters personal relationships and strips away the intimidation factor that can sometimes come with leadership titles. Openly talk about your mistakes, development opportunities and lessons learned as a way of helping others excel. This provides opportunities to gather feedback and ideas from your team members, and helps everyone strive for continuous improvement.

Building trust includes putting people at ease. In the corporate world where everyone is talented and works hard, those leaders with emotional intelligence and soft skills have an advantage. Being accessible, asking questions, listening and just being genuinely interested about your team members is what builds great relationships.

The old adage that trust is something that you must earn, holds true. Therefore, to win the hearts and minds of your teammates requires commitment and consistency. Positive interactions that leave your team members inspired and excited are the ones that build trust!

About The Author



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