

The Power of Trust:

How to Engage Employees and Keep Customers



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Every organization wants committed employees and loyal customers but how do you translate these goals into reality?

According to extensive research the single greatest factor in creating dedicated employees and enthused customers is the issue of trust. The levels of trust in an organization is determined primarily by the way employees feel about leaders; it extends to the way employees feel about each other; and finally gets translated into great customer service.

THE FOCUS

This workshop is designed to help leaders recognize the three most common **‘trust-breaking’** behaviors that can generate a sense of distrust among employees and the three corresponding **‘trust-building’** behaviors that lead to high employee engagement and award winning service. In addition to understanding the business case, learning the key behaviors, and assessing organizational practices, each participant does individual action planning designed to eliminate unhealthy behavior patterns; and help them ‘walk the talk’.

Introduction – Why It Is So Hard for Managers to Establish Trust

- Americans are less trusting than in the past.
- Americans distrust those in power.
- Americans distrust Big Business.
- Leaders frequently fail to take responsibility for their actions.

Trust-Breaker Number One – Inconsistency

- Inconsistency is behavior that is not in harmony with the core values of the organization, accepted norms, or verbal messaging.
 - Gray areas that demonstrate inconsistency:
 - Over-committing
 - Breaking promises
 - Covering mistakes
 - Withholding information

- Minimizing problems
- Being disingenuous
- Having double-standards
- Participants are asked to have a lengthy discussion about someone that they trust and why. Then they are asked to give their assessment of trust levels within the organization and on their teams.
- In-depth discussion about the relationship between trust and employee engagement levels.

Trust-Builder Number One – Integrity

- Integrity is saying what you mean, and meaning what you say.
- Examination of how leaders ‘spin’ information. Spin is defined as ‘not quite lying, and not quite telling the truth.’
Examples:
 - Ambiguity or double-talk
 - Skirting the issue
 - Cherry picking
 - Non-denial denial
 - Euphemisms
- Discussion of whether or not the corporate culture is perceived as one where leaders speak openly, honestly, sincerely, forthrightly, and unambiguously. Afterwards they are asked to engage in a brainstorming session to formulate strategies that would support the practice of straightforward communication between leaders and employees.
- Participants are asked to have a candid dialogue comparing the core values of the organization with employee perceptions of leadership practices (reference internal surveys and focus group data if available). They are also asked to give specific examples of tangible actions they have engaged in that demonstrate their commitment to the employees on their team.

Trust-Breaker Number Two – Indifference

- Indifference is showing little or no personal interest in someone else. Exemplified by statements like “I don’t need to like someone in order to work with them” or “I think it’s better not to get too friendly with the people that work for me”.
- Participants are asked to discuss some of the reasons it seems harder to build quality relationships at work. Such as:
 - High-tech/low-touch environment
 - Warp-speed pace
 - Excessive workload

- Time pressures
- Constant change of personnel
- Increasing diversity
- Group discussions – What are some things that you do or don't do that might be interpreted by your team members as indifference?

Trust-Builder Number Two – Caring

- Caring is demonstrating genuine concern for someone else's well-being.
- Integrity alone is not enough to earn someone's trust; you have to convince others that you care. Group discussion: "Why are employees fearful, insecure, suspicious, doubtful, and reluctant to trust?"
- Dialogue around the question "Who trusts you and why? What did you do to earn that person's trust? What were the benefits?"

Trust-Breaker Number Three – Laxity

- Laxity is an unwillingness to admit, confront, or own problems. Some leaders are as honest as the day is long, and compassionate to everyone, but the reason they are not trusted is because they do not squarely address failures or mistakes.
- Leaders must be responsible to take the necessary actions to make sure that the team or organization stays on course to meet its goals. There are two different examples of a lax leader: those that won't confront the mistakes of others; and those that won't admit their own mistakes.
- There is always negative fallout when a leader fails to confront a problem employee:
 - Makes other employees think they can get away with things (domino effect)
 - Forces top performers to pick up the slack
 - Hinders team or organizational goal achievement
 - Damages morale and performance
 - Creates an unsafe environment
 - Makes leadership look weak
 - Leads to negativity, bad attitudes, rumor mills, passive aggressive behavior, and attrition
- Group discussion: What are some bad habits that are tolerated in the organization? Why are leaders reluctant to confront these problems?

Trust-Builder Number Three – Accountability

- Accountability is taking ownership of problems and seeking solutions.
- Examination of the Performance Correction Process
 - Establish clear expectations
 - Observe performance
 - Give frequent feedback
 - Confront non-performance by highlighting objective and specific behaviors
 - Create a joint action plan
 - Set a timetable for compliance
 - Apply negative consequences or positive reinforcement
- Participants are asked to honestly discuss the step (or steps) that are most challenging for them; and the step (or steps) that they excel at.
- The second aspect of accountability is how to handle failures:
 - Admit mistakes quickly
 - Take full responsibility for everything (don't rationalize, justify, or blame)
 - Acknowledge that you have learned valuable lessons
 - Make changes to safeguard repeating the same mistake in the future
- Small group discussion: "When was the last time you apologized or owned a mistake? How did you handle it? How was it received?"
- Action planning worksheets are distributed and attendees are asked to list specific behaviors they intend to STOP engaging in that could be perceived as examples of inconsistency, indifference, and laxity and behaviors they intend to START engaging in that will be demonstrations of integrity, caring, and accountability.