The Journey Ahead
Building Trust into Your Leadership

Establishing and maintaining trust is one of the most critical challenges in our civilization today. This was publicly evident by following the latest news on both houses of the government in their struggles to not shutdown government processes. Neither party trusted the other's statements and intents; consequently, there was a 16 day shutdown of our governing body.

According to the 2010 Ethics & Workplace Survey by Deloitte LLP, 30% of working Americans are planning to search for another job when the economy gets better. From this same group, 48% stated their reason for the new search is a loss of trust in their employer. The survey also reported that 65% of Fortune 1000 executives believe that trust will be the key factor in the increase of voluntary employee departures in the near future.

Trust lives as a collaborative mood for an organization and cannot be commanded. Unfortunately, trust is usually sent to the background and not given the attention it needs to live. Trust can be lacking because power appears to be in control of others, not you. People fail the trust test in the area of sincerity when we believe that the public conversations they have (what they tell others) and the private conversation they have (what they are really telling themselves) is not congruent. Without trust there cannot be an effective learning environment or an effective organization.

The CEO of Mother Nature Network, Joel Babbit, stated "I believe in really hard work, respect and honesty. I don't think there's anything worse in business than somebody who gives you their word and then goes back on it. If you give somebody your word internally or as a representative of the company, it has to be done—no ifs, ands or buts. That's trust."

How do you know if you do not have trust in the workplace? Pay attention to any of these behaviors from your staff or colleagues:

- Team members conduct their tasks under pressure with only satisfactory results, not real depth or creativity. They may be distrustful that you will take credit for their work and use for your career goals.
- Colleagues will openly cooperate in meetings, but deliver excuses when deadlines approach for their project objectives. They will shift the focus from what they should have done to what you did not do for them that delayed achievement. Hence, they are moving the blame.
- Assignments were not delegated and managed carefully. Subsequently, the staff can feel they are being held accountable for expectations unknown to them resulting in resentment or anger.
- As a team leader, you may have failed to honor so many commitments that no one trusts your credibility. Team members will begin to have 'acceptable' conversations with you telling you what they think you need to hear so they can leave your office or presence. You will hear statements such as, 'Whatever you want, Of course, I'll look into it!'

For leadership, these are the practices you will need to earn trust or rebuild tarnished trust:

- Do not rush to finish someone else's train of thought, even though you may know the conclusion they will be coming to.   By allowing the other party to complete their conversation completely, you will demonstrate that you are giving them time to be heard; and, are trying to fully appreciate their concerns.
- Self monitor your responses to other's issues. Responding continuously with, 'Awesome or We're good', may demonstrate they you are disingenuous. Often, paraphrasing some of their points can ensure you are following the conversation; and, have a full appreciation of their circumstances.
- Renew and encourage the company culture by demonstrating the core values in your leadership practices. Be consistent. Consistent leaders use their internal core values as their guidebook to establish the mood and cohesiveness of the workplace. Consistent leaders are reliable, confident without being a despot; and, demonstrate courage in the most difficult of economic times or marketplace changes.
- Align the teams' work practices with positive language using requests, not demands for collaboration on joint goals. Constructive working methodologies will shape the entire team for mutual trust and increase their capacity for action.
- Important information not hidden
- Together, shared decision making enhances mutual trust. Reach agreement on the vehicles or mechanisms that will keep everyone focused on the delivery of your spoken commitments, along with a check in process so that all know of progress or problems.

When you need to strengthen trust practices in your leadership, *ask yourself* these questions:
- If you asked your colleagues how well you engage with them, what would they say?
- What resources do you need to keep your commitments? If trust is based on timely delivery, are you allocating sufficient time for your commitments to be met with other parties; consequently, helping their expectations become reality?
- What larger contributions could you make to the company by establishing trustful relationships with other departments or other managers?
- Do you make 'safe' decisions for the company and appear domineering in doing it?
- When you present a new methodology, are you open to feedback?   How do you instill trust in pursuing this new idea, especially if it has not been conducted at your company before?

"Earning trust is not easy, or is it cheap, nor does it happen quickly. Earning trust is hard and demanding work. Trust comes only with genuine effort, never with a lick and a promise."
Max DePree

If this resonates with your current situation, we invite you to realize your efforts with us.