

Building Trust in the Workplace: A Valuable Topic for Leadership Training

Trust is the foundation of all successful interpersonal relationships, both personal and business. Trust is the confidence or belief a person feels toward a particular person or group. Trust is, therefore, one of the primary binding forces in any interpersonal relationship. It permits people to overcome doubts and unknowns and enjoy peace of mind. The absence of trust causes confusion, worry, inaction, and fear. When interpersonal trust is present, a person feels a confidence that everything will somehow work out. In the workplace, trust is a prerequisite for effective interpersonal communications. Without trust, employees may feel uncertainty, worry, and a sense of insecurity. No relationship, personal or business, can exist for even a short period of time if some element of trust is not present. Trust is an essential leadership training ingredient that binds any human relationship into an effective, working partnership.

Even though trust is fundamental to human relationships, it is actually misunderstood by many people. People use trust, or the lack of it, to explain good and bad relationships with others. Consider the cliché phrases: "Don't worry, you can trust me" and "Just trust me." Trust has become both a buzzword and an excuse in our society. Trust is as much abused as it is used in today's business world. It is used to define and explain; yet few leadership training programs have seriously considered what it is and what it is not.

Psychologists are just beginning to learn how trust really works. Research suggests that trusting relationships are predictable, caring, and faithful. When a manager's behavior is consistent over a period of time and another person can reasonably predict that behavior, trust is possible. By contrast, it is difficult to trust a person whose actions are inconsistent or unpredictable.

Caring in a relationship involves actions that express consideration toward the other person. Through effective leadership training, a caring supervisor knows when final exams are scheduled at the local college and asks employees who will be taking the tests how much time off will be needed to study. A caring supervisor finds out about a birth, death, anniversary, graduation, or sickness and sends a card to the employee's home.

Faith is the belief that an employee's behavior will be in direct response to the trust placed in that relationship. Faith can be demonstrated by communicating clear expectations and then telling the employee, "I know you and I believe you can accomplish this assignment." Managers who have difficulty demonstrating faith in others typically have difficulty trusting them as well. Trust as a leadership training component can help change this.

Building trust in the workplace is vital for a long-lasting, satisfying, rewarding, and successful relationship. Leadership training helps effective managers practice behaviors that promote and build trusting relationships. They learn to do this with consistent actions each day. In return they obtain the benefits of high-trust employee relations. These benefits include higher morale, increased initiative, improved honesty, and better productivity. All are important aspects of a profitable and rewarding business experience.

It's not uncommon for people to use the word "trust" to describe a feeling they have regarding some interpersonal relationships. Trust does not magically appear in a relationship without certain elements preceding it over time. And once trust has been breached it is difficult and sometimes impossible to establish once again.

Three steps pave the path before enduring trust begins. The first step is effective communications. When we communicate effectively with another person we have an opportunity to move that relationship to the second step, which is real understanding. That is when two people have communicated to the point of honest and deep understanding. This can lead to the third step in the relationship of mutual respect. A respecting relationship demands that each person contribute enough respect that it can be reciprocated back from the other person. Unilateral respect in relationships is temporary and superficial. Mutual respect that can lead to trust is much deeper and must come from communicated understanding. Once a relationship has experienced mutual respect it is possible for the participants to experience enduring relational trust. This is a feeling that binds people together over time and through trials.

The four steps are dependent upon the actions or integrity of the individuals involved. Integrity is not only keeping

agreements, but it is also "walking the talk." If, for example, a person communicates deceitfully, how much understanding will there be? And how much respect will the other person have? Ultimately trust will be lacking.

Enduring trust is a leadership training process that takes time and effort. It is clearly the essence of what fuels meaningful relationships.

Test your Trust.

Answer the following five statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not true and 5 is completely true.

1. My actions each day demonstrate that I trust my employees.
2. My employees can trust me with sensitive or private information.
3. I would never betray a trust with an employee.
4. I keep confidences and would never share confidential information inappropriately.
5. I am able to trust my employees.

Tally your scores from the five items. A total score of 20 to 25 would indicate that you and your employees probably share an atmosphere of trust. A score of 15-19 would indicate that trust is present, but not in abundance. A score of 14 or less probably means that some additional leadership training efforts in building trust would be appropriate.

To learn how leadership training programs and building trust in the workplace can help your organization, contact a CMOE representative at (801)569-3444

Short note about the author

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