

# DEVELOPING TRUST.

## Checklist 243

### » INTRODUCTION

Trust is a fundamental element of any relationship including that between a leader and their people. Trust is the glue that holds relationships together. Trust can be the key to building high-performance organisations. When trust is absent however, a leader may find that their followers turn to someone else for guidance and direction. This can lead to confusion over direction internally or to criticism and potential reputation damage if a breakdown in trust leads to people taking their concerns outside the organisation. Trust is earned and built up over time. It can take a long while to establish, yet only moments to destroy. Once trust is lost it is difficult to rebuild.

Trust is two-way: managers need to be able to trust their team to conduct their duties to the highest possible standards and delegate with confidence that the job will be carried out. Similarly, followers have to be able to trust their managers to lead them in the right direction to fulfil the objectives of both their own department, and those of the wider organisation. They have to be certain that the person they are led by is not solely motivated by a personal agenda, but has the best interests of the team and the organisation at the forefront of their decision making. It is imperative that followers can trust their leaders to defend them when appropriate, and can be sure that their manager is making the right decisions for the right reasons.

Encouraging the behaviours that build trust and establishing relationships based on trust can energise and motivate employees, improve morale and employee engagement, which in turn leads to increased productivity, performance and retention.

### » DEFINITION

Trust can be broadly defined as having confidence in the honesty, integrity, and reliability of another person, firmly believing that they will act in accordance with what they say. Trust includes many aspects such as: being trusted to maintain a confidence; having trusted abilities; being trusted to share the same aims; displaying judgement that one can trust; being trusted to give honest feedback; having trustworthy motives and ambitions; and being trusted to deliver what the boss wants on time.

### » THE ABCD TRUST MODEL™

A model developed by Ken Blanchard and presented in his book *Trust Works* provides a simple framework for understanding, communicating, developing and assessing trust. It identifies four areas:

- A - Able – demonstrate competence
- B - Believability – act with integrity
- C - Connected – care about others
- D - Dependable – maintain reliability

### 1. **Be patient**

Trust is not automatically present in a working relationship. It needs to be developed and nurtured over a period of time. The process cannot be rushed so patience should be exercised until trust has been successfully built. Aim to cultivate trust slowly ensuring that once you have it, you are careful to maintain it. Never take trust for granted. Remember that trust is transient and can be lost more quickly than it is earned.

Developing trust will be particularly difficult if you are taking over a well-established team, especially if your predecessor was a trusted leader. Employees become familiar with the management style and behaviour of a manager, so inevitably the replacement of one leader for another will require a period of adjustment for both parties. In this situation it is vital to take the opportunity to reassure your new team that you can be trusted by showing them that you are in it for the long-haul, and are committed to delivering on your promises.

### 2. **Demonstrate integrity**

Integrity is a key building block for forming a trusting relationship. You must be honest in your actions and your communications, showing that you are genuine in both. Be honest, both with yourself and with your team at all times, even when things don't work out as you may have planned. Freely admit when you are wrong or don't know something and reveal your vulnerabilities. This will go a long way to helping you become a trusted leader who is able to be open without fear of reproach.

Never under any circumstances should you lie, even if you feel you have already gained the trust of others. Lying is deceptive. This can only have a negative impact on relationships. Demonstrate your integrity by having the courage to act in accordance with your own beliefs and principles, and to let others see that you speak from your heart not just your head. The importance of integrity increases with seniority as others will expect to see you 'live' the values by which both you and the organisation are governed.

### 3. **Communicate openly with your team**

Communication is another fundamental element for building trust. Others will find it difficult to trust you if they feel that you are keeping something from them, have some form of hidden agenda, or do not actually believe what you are saying. Make your intent clear by communicating in a straight-forward way, so that your words are not misunderstood or misinterpreted. Honest and open communication will effectively engage your staff. It is imperative that you are consistent in your communication. Communicating and cascading information will also help your team to feel included and that they have the knowledge necessary to fulfil their duties. This will reduce the feelings of vulnerability which can arise if they are 'kept in the dark'. If employees feel that the information you are cascading is accurate and timely, they are more likely to trust what you tell them. Communicate with the purpose of sharing knowledge; never deliberately withhold information as a means of control.

### 4. **Get the job done right**

For others to trust and believe in you as a leader, it is imperative that you demonstrate you can achieve what you set out to achieve. You may talk a good talk, but until you actually walk the talk, your people will find it difficult to believe what you say. Be consistent in word and deed and you are well on your way to becoming a trusted leader. It will take time to develop a track record, but aim to start as you mean to go on. By fulfilling the team's expectations of you, you will slowly gain credibility. This will help to convince them of your ability to follow through on subsequent ventures and consequently gain their support. Take responsibility for your own actions, admitting mistakes without being defensive, and apologising when necessary. When you can demonstrate that you have the ability to deliver what you promise, you will begin to build a reputation as a successful leader, who can not only be relied upon to perform, but more importantly, can be trusted.

## **5. Consider the bigger picture**

In order to win the trust of others, you must show that you have their needs, and those of the organisation, in mind. Don't focus exclusively on your own achievements and objectives. Others will find it difficult to trust a leader who is motivated solely by their own agenda. Let others see that you really care about them and the organisation and you will soon receive their trust and respect. By showing that you are driven by wider organisational objectives, and those of your immediate team, you will help to develop a culture of trust which will hopefully continue long after your own tenure with the company. Let your team know what targets you have to reach and how this affects the department. In this way they see the positive impact you are making and understand that you are committed to delivering on your promises.

## **6. Don't abuse your position**

Occupying a position of seniority within an organisation brings with it its own 'granted' power. However, do not use your status as a means of controlling your workforce, as trust cannot be gained in this way. Rather, delegate tasks to others, and encourage them to take certain courses of action, as opposed to simply dictating to them. Use your position of power positively to make improvements that will benefit both your team and the wider organisation.

## **7. Show that you trust your team**

The imposition of too many rules and regulations will send the message that you don't really trust your team. You have to demonstrate faith in their professional ability to conduct their duties according to expectations. If you demonstrate your trust in them, they are more likely to respond in kind. Don't undermine your position as a trusted leader by needless employee monitoring. Instead, trust your team to be accountable for their own areas of responsibility, and to make decisions commensurate with their role. Refrain from interfering with the work of others, unless you feel that their actions are damaging. Aim to create an environment where trust is reciprocated so that you can effectively engage your staff and boost productivity.

## **8. Encourage the sharing of ideas**

Your team need to be able to trust you before they will share their thoughts. You are responsible for the welfare of your staff and thus it is vital that they can trust you. Show your staff that you are genuinely interested in them, their opinions and their welfare and that you can be trusted to keep a confidence. Never betray a confidence or engage in tittle-tattle about others. Provide the opportunity for your staff to express their views, and listen with genuine interest. Be open to the perspectives of others without being judgmental. Aim to create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas without fear of recrimination, even if they express opinions that are at odds with your own. Trust others to communicate and they will reciprocate that trust in you. It is also vital that you develop sound listening skills. Listening to the views and ideas of others will develop a trusting relationship, especially if you act upon their feelings, and show that you are giving them just consideration.

## **9. Deal with poor performance**

You must address poor performance in order to be credible to others. Be consistent in your approach to discipline, ensuring that you are fair at all times. Eliminate feelings of discrimination or 'favouritism'. Trust and respect go hand in hand. Do all you can to ensure that this happens. Try not to develop a culture of blame. Challenge your staff when necessary without being antagonistic, and aim to gain an understanding of their actions and their perspective, rather than blaming them.

## **10. Be consistent**

Be consistent in your communications, actions, attitudes and behaviour. This will enable others to anticipate how you will react and respond in a given situation. This provides them with the reassurance that you will not

act unpredictably. If you behave inconsistently, they will be unable to easily anticipate your reaction. This will make them suspicious and wary, and will develop a culture of uncertainty rather than one of trust.

## » POTENTIAL PITFALLS

Managers should avoid:

- › 'talking the talk' without following through on promises
- › betraying a confidence
- › using authority as a means of control
- › being inconsistent
- › ignoring poor performance
- › taking trust for granted
- › forgetting that trust is fragile and can be destroyed more quickly than it can be earned.

## » ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### BOOKS

**Trust works: Four keys to building lasting relationships**, Ken Blanchard; Cynthia Olmstead and Martha Lawrence,  
London: HarperCollins, 2013

**Trust me...I'm a leader**  
London: NHS Confederation, 2013

**Smart trust: Creating prosperity, energy, and joy in a low trust world**, Stephen M R Covey, Greg Link and Rebecca R Merrill,  
London: Simon and Schuster, 2012

**Managers, can you hear me now: Hard-hitting lessons on how to get real results**, Denny F Strigl and Frank Swiatek,  
New York NY: McGraw-Hill, 2011

**Transparency: how leaders create a culture of candor**, Warren Bennis, Daniel Goleman, James O'Toole and Patricia Ward Biederman,  
San Francisco Calif: Jossey-Bass, 2008  
This book is available as an [e-book](#)

**The speed of trust: the one thing that changes everything**, Stephen M. R. Covey and Rebecca R Merrill  
New York, NY: Free Press, 2006

**Trust matters for organisational and personal success**, Sally Bibb and Jeremy Kourdi  
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004

This is a selection of books available for loan to members from CMI's library. More information at: [www.managers.org.uk/library](http://www.managers.org.uk/library)

### JOURNAL ARTICLES

**Trust**, Ken Blanchard  
Training Journal, July 2013, pp 55-58

**Build and maintain trust**, Andre De Waal  
Training Journal, September 2012, pp37-40

This is a selection of journal articles available to members from CMI's library. More information at:  
[www.managers.org.uk/library](http://www.managers.org.uk/library)



## NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

This checklist has relevance for the following standards:

- › Unit DD1: Develop and sustain productive working relationships with colleagues.



## MORE INFORMATION

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