



# The Strategic Advantage

## Building Trust

*“Those who trust us educate us.”*

*~T.S. Eliot*

A lack of trust in the workplace can lead to stress, divisiveness, poor employee performance and talented workers

heading for more motivating environments. Yet, most leaders of organizations think they inspire trust. So, what happens to create a lack of trust?

Trust is about being reliable, accepting, open and congruent. Establishing trust is a big factor that will determine success for you and your organization -- especially in a rough business climate when employees are watching your every move even more than normal.

How is trust built? Simply, leaders have to do what they say and say what they do. Given such simplicity – why is it so difficult? Among the many reasons are: employees and their managers have different agendas, information is withheld, communication is not clear and not enough attention is paid to reaction, feedback and change.

Sometimes we are in a positive bubble about our own actions. We often make the mistake of looking at others rather than ourselves. Our impact is different from our intent and we don't even know it. Success is reached not in the generalities of a situation, but in the specifics. It is important to pay attention to the impact of your words – not the intent. They are often not the same and not as you had planned.

### Ingredients For Trust

**Reliable** - Doing what you say you will do.

**Accepting** - Accepting other people for who they are and not what they do.

**Open** - Being open with other people and telling them exactly what you think and how you feel about things.

**Congruent** - Walking Your Talk. Assuring that what you think, how you feel, what you say and what you do are all aligned.

Sometimes follow-up questions or more information is needed to determine the impact on your staff. This process may take time and effort; but not much is achieved, including trust, without time and effort.

Many people are unwilling to trust because of their life experiences – either personal or professional. They have been “burned” before and have a shield and resistance around them. They feel they have been repeatedly misinformed and misled and it will happen again.

Trust is hard enough to build from a clean slate but particularly difficult when life experiences,



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***“The people when rightly and fully trusted will return the trust”***

***~ Abraham Lincoln***

unaddressed rumors and perceptions get in the way. Such a situation means you only have to try harder and be more conscious of your

actions and the actions of others within your organization. Regular communication from you and management helps build trust. Tell employees all you can so they don't need to fill in the blanks. If you don't know the answer, say so and say why.

Even in an organization where trust is thought to be a priority, things happen daily that can injure trust – without even knowing it. Examine all issues that cause concern – either on a “gut” level (a stirring of uncertainty)

or on a “real” level (actually seeing or hearing something). Address them both as soon as you can.

Trust forms the foundation for effective communication, employee retention and employee motivation. Almost everything is easier and more comfortable to achieve when trust exists in an organization. The rewards of establishing a foundation of trust are huge; just as huge as the consequences of not establishing trust.

As the leader of your organization, it is your responsibility to impart to your managers their duty to build trust with their employees. Set an example for your managers and your employees. Your attitude is contagious and modeled.

## Building Trust - Do you...

- Share honest information, even if it is to your disadvantage?
- Do what you say you will do? Fulfill promises?
- Ask hard questions to build and protect your organization?
- Listen and consider others' ideas with an open mind?
- Focus on issues and solutions rather than personalities?
- Set the example, by being responsible and accountable?

***“Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him.”***  
***~Booker T. Washington***

## Take Strategic Action

- Does your staff perceive you as trustworthy?
- How do you know?
- How do you perceive your staff?
- How do you measure the impact of your statements?
- Does your staff express their honest opinions and thoughts?
- How do you know?



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