

# BUILDING TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE



Human Resource Experts have long been attempting to refine the concept of Building Trust in the Workplace. In Risk Management, this is essential to meeting our Mission Statements. Without the trust of our staff and teams we can never build a culture that can inspire and drive a Safe Working Environments. I found an article by Dave Bowman from TTC Consultants the best to meet our need and concerns as Risk Managers.

## The Five Best Ways to Build – And Lose Trust in the Workplace

Many experts agree that trust is perhaps the most important element of a harmonious, synergistic and efficient work environment. Organizations that have trust among employees are usually successful, those that don't frequently are not.

So, management often asks, "how can we build trust in the workforce, and how can we avoid losing it?" Well, it all starts at the very top, since trustfulness - and trustworthiness - can exist only if top management sets the example, and then builds that example into every department and unit.

I've found there are five excellent ways for leaders to build trust into their teams, and five quick ways to lose it. First let's consider how to **create** it.

1. *Establish and maintain integrity.* It is the foundation of trust in any organization. Integrity must begin at the top and then move down. This means, among other things, keeping promises and always telling the truth, no matter how difficult it might be. If its people have integrity, an organization can be believed.
2. *Communicate vision and values.* Communication is important, since it provides the artery for information and truth. By communicating the organization's vision, management defines where it's going. By communicating its values, the methods for getting there are established.
3. *Consider all employees as equal partners.* Trust is established when even the newest rookie, a part-timer, or the lowest paid employee feels important and part of the team. This begins with management not being aloof, as well as getting out and meeting the troops. This should be followed by leaders seeking opinions and ideas (and giving credit for them), knowing the names of employees and their families and treating one and all with genuine respect.

4. *Focus on shared, rather than personal goals.* When employees feel everyone is pulling together to accomplish a shared vision, rather than a series of personal agendas, trust results. This is the essence of teamwork. When a team really works, the players trust one another.
5. *Do what's right, regardless of personal risk.* We all know intuitively what's "right" in nearly every situation. Following this instinctive sense, and ignoring any personal consequences will nearly always create respect from those around us. From this respect will come trust.

All right, that's the positive. But what about the negative - the five fastest ways to **lose** trust from our co-workers.

1. *Act and speak inconsistently.* Nothing confuses people faster than inconsistency. And if confusion due to contradiction is the only constant, trust is sure to fall victim.
2. *Seek personal rather than shared gain.* One who is out only for him or herself, especially in a team environment, quickly loses the respect and trust of others.
3. *Withhold information.* When the communication channels shut down - both top-down and bottom-up - rumors start and misinformation is believed to be real. Then come denials. True information is often too late, or is never offered. Then trust falls apart.
4. *Lie or tell half-truths.* Untruthfulness is a quick way to break a bond of trust. People may accept it once, even twice, but as the old saying goes, "twice burned..."
5. *Be closed-minded.* An unwillingness to consider other ideas and points of view, and/or to create an atmosphere of, "it's going to be my way or the highway....," will certainly cut-off communication and eventually shatter trust.

When we look at the truly successful organizations of both today and yesterday, we find their leaders fostered these five principles of creating trust. Consider the great military leaders of history (Augustus Caesar, Oliver Cromwell and George Washington), as well as the genuinely beloved political leaders (yes, there actually have been some: Joan of Arc, Peter the Great and Gandhi). And then there are the highly respected industrial leaders (Henry Ford, Lee Iacocca and Jack Welch). All of these great leaders built trust among their superiors, peers and subordinates, and it was this that spurred success and greatness for themselves, their units, alliances and companies.