

Building Higher Trust 9 Trust and Communication

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Communication is one of the most foundational skills in any organization. Leaders spend a lot of time communicating with people in their organization, yet when workers are asked what the most significant blockage is to motivation, most groups report that communication is the biggest problem.

In this brief article I will explore the relationship between how well communication works in a high trust environment versus a low trust environment.

When Trust is Low

Even in a world where everyone is physically in one place, communication becomes chancy if there is low trust. People tend to hear what they believe the leader is trying to say rather than what was actually said. It is so easy to get the wrong flavor of a message, and the real damage is done because the leader often does not know that his or her message was misinterpreted.

When Trust is High

When Trust is high, people have an easy time hearing the real message and interpreting it accurately. In these cases, the leader can tell by the body language whether the workers have absorbed the true meaning. This is true both in person and virtually.

With high trust, people will not feel intimidated if they are unclear about the real message. They will feel free to ask a question for clarification because there is psychological safety, and they know a legitimate question will not lead to them feeling punished.

Working Remotely

The issue of accurate and believable communication is amplified significantly when we have a hybrid workforce where some people are working in the office but others are working from home or remotely, sometimes even in another country, where time zone and cultural issues can exacerbate the problem. It is so easy to have the remote

workers feel at least inconvenienced or at worst left completely out of the tight communication loop.

That is why it is imperative that all leaders redouble their efforts to communicate as much or more with the remote people as they do with the people close at hand. Try to beat down the “us versus them” issues that result in silo thinking.

Conclusion

When trust is low, communication is going to be chancy and difficult to control. This is true for all types of communication, including electronic communication. When trust is high, there is a much better chance for robust and acceptable communication. Trust becomes a significant enabler of effective and timely communication.

Bonus Video

Here is a [brief video on Trust and Communication](#).

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of four books: 1. The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals (2003), 2. Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online (2006), 3. Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind (2009), and 4. Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change (2014). In addition, he has authored over 1000 articles and videos on various topics in leadership and trust. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations