

Building Higher Trust 11 Trust and the Need for Perfection

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



For leaders, there is a direct correlation between the level of trust and the need for them to be perfect. I discovered this phenomenon while doing the research for my third book, [“Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind.”](#)

If Trust is low

If you are a leader of a low trust group, you need to be practically perfect, like Mary Poppins. The reason is that in an environment of low trust,

people are poised like coiled snakes ready to pounce on any opportunity to misinterpret the intent of their leader.

Leaders need to spend continuous effort to spin every statement exactly right or suffer the consequences of the skeptical people who work them. These leaders find it difficult to relax and enjoy the ride because they are always on guard.

When Trust is high

When leaders can build up culture of high trust, things are a lot easier. People will cut these leaders some slack if something is not exactly right. The leaders might say something in a way that could be misinterpreted. They might make a wrong calculated risk. They might forget to deliver an implied reward.

In high trust groups, people are willing to give the leader the benefit of the doubt. They know that the right intent was there, even if something came out less than perfect. These leaders can relax and enjoy the wonderful ride of leading in a high trust environment.

Of course, leaders of high trust groups have that advantage because they have not done a lot of messing up in the past. There is low danger of making a lot of mistakes, and the art of leading is fun.

Bonus Video

Here is a [brief video that explains the concept further](#).

Conclusion

Leading a low trust group is awfully hard work. It can be exhausting as you struggle to be perfect at all times. Leading a high trust group is a blast, because you can relax knowing the people who report to you are truly on your side.

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