

Building Higher Trust 16 Engagement

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



The level of engagement of workers in the operation has a lot to do with their productivity.

There have been several studies indicating that workers with very high engagement are at least two times more productive than workers who are not engaged.

The Gallup Organization has a study each year that attempts to measure the percentage of workers in the average organization that are fully engaged in the work.

Their research fluctuates a bit from year to year, but the estimate is normally about 30% of the workforce are engaged.

Those two factors taken together point to a huge opportunity to improve productivity in the average organization.

By changing the way people are led so that the engagement is over 50%, the productivity improvement would be astronomical.

That opportunity becomes a significant area of challenge for leaders, because the level of worker engagement is very much in their control.

Lower Fear and Raise Trust

A close examination of the factors that increase trust reveals a strong link between trust and fear.

If leaders can figure out how to reduce the fear in an organization, trust will grow with little effort. My favorite quote on this dynamic is, "The absence of fear is the incubator of trust."

So how do you lower fear?

The answer is simple. Leaders need to create an environment where people at all levels are not afraid to say what they are thinking.

In most organizations, people fail to speak up because they fear their leader will make some kind of retribution on them.

What leaders need to do is provide “psychological safety” for the workers whereby they know if they speak their truth they will not be punished. In fact, they will be rewarded for their candor.

Leaders Need to Reinforce Candor

If leaders let people know they will honor people’s input, even if it is not 100% congruent with what the leader thinks, people will begin to trust them.

The workers will become more engaged and hence much more productive. The improvement is guaranteed.

This formula is the single most important lesson for leaders to grasp.

I have written on this aspect of leadership as the most important lessons for leaders to internalize in all my books. It really helps an organization obtain much better performance.

Bonus video

Here is a [brief video about Trust and Engagement](#)

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