

Building Higher Trust 25 Trust and Fear

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



I have been studying Trust for over 30 years. The topic is so engaging to me because trust turns out to be THE MOST IMPORTANT ingredient for good leadership. I have written four books and hundreds of articles on the topic of trust.

One thing occurred to me decades ago is that trust and fear are incompatible. When there is fear between people or in an organization, you generally find low trust. If you can find a way to reduce the fear, then trust almost grows spontaneously. I like to say that the trust will bloom naturally, just like the lilacs in the spring.

Another favorite quotation of mine is, “The absence of fear is the incubator of trust.”

When teaching leaders how to improve their performance, I focus a lot of energy on ways to reduce the fear. There are many ways to accomplish this critical factor. For example, being honest and trustworthy will reduce fear and grow trust.

Another way to reduce fear is to be transparent and share things openly rather than hide them. If people know they are getting the full story, then they don't have to worry about things as much.

Always walking your talk will reduce fear, because people can count on you to keep your word. Your word is your bond.

By far the most impactful way to lower fear in any organization is to create psychological safety. If people believe they are free to express their concerns without fear of retribution, then trust will blossom

The leadership behavior that creates psychological safety is to “reinforce candor.” If a leader praises people when they voice an opinion that is contrary to what the leader espouses, then fear will subside and trust will grow in its place.

Difficult to do

Most leaders find it difficult or even impossible to praise people when they express a contrary opinion because the leader simply believes he or she has the correct perspective. So, the employee who voices a differing view must be wrong in the leader's opinion.

Learning how to make an employee feel glad he or she brought up a contrary view is a critical leadership skill that I teach in all my courses. This habit has more power to increase trust than anything else.

Bonus video

Here is a [brief video on the relationship between trust and fear.](#)

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.

The
TRUST
Ambassador

