

Building Higher Trust 29 Trust Recovery

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



When trust has been broken the path to repair it can be scary. In this article, I will outline the steps that should happen to have the best chance for a full recovery. Recognize that not all trust betrayals can lead to a full recovery, but many of them can with the proper attitude and effort.

Step 1. Communicate a Potential Problem

As soon as you recognize that something happened between you and the other person that could compromise trust, you need to communicate that to the person. Usually, it takes some courage to do this because a trust violation is often an ugly thing to behold. If you believe the relationship can be salvaged, then it is worth an uncomfortable conversation.

Step 2. Confirm that Both Parties are Interested in a Resolution

If the relationship was valuable to both parties, then it is worth some effort to at least attempt to repair the damage. If you go in with the attitude that you really enjoyed the trusting relationship you had before the lapse, then the other person will likely respond in kind.

Step 3. Each Person Shares his or her Perception of What Happened

This step is just a factual recount of the events. Who did what? Sometimes this step will reveal a misunderstanding about what happened. If that is the case, then the repair is much easier to accomplish.

Step 4. Determine What Would Need to Change to Repair the Damage

This step could start with an apology, but it needs to go further. Trust has been damaged, and it will not get fixed by a simple “I’m sorry.” You need to think hard about what conditions need to be met in order to fully restore trust. It may take some time, but this is a critical step in the process.

Step 5. Make a Concrete Plan

This plan should not be just good intentions. It should include what each party is going to do differently in the future based on the prior steps. A good format for the plan would include who is going to do what by when. It is best to put the plan in writing.

Step 6. Execute the Plan

This sounds obvious, but it is where many people fail. They have good intentions when discussing things, but they do not have the fortitude, courage, or ability to actually do it.

Step 7 Follow Up to Verify the Repair

This verification phase is critical to do because you can put the matter to rest once both parties agree that the plan was followed successfully. Both parties must express certainty that the repair to trust was actually made.

Conclusion

In most cases, it is possible to repair damaged trust, but it takes effort and an organized approach. If the relationship you had with the other person was valuable to both parties, then it is worth the effort to repair the damage and move forward. Again.

Bonus video

Here is a [brief video on a Trust Recovery Process](#)

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.

