

## Building Higher Trust 49 Trust and Consistency

by Robert Whipple: MBA, CPTD



What is the relationship between trust and consistency? I am sure that most of us agree that to be trustworthy, a person must be consistent. We have all heard the phrase “walk your talk,” which is one of the precepts for building trust. The point seems obvious, but in this article, I will discuss some interesting nuances that you may not have considered.

I will aim my comments at leaders here, but the same logic holds for people at any level. I will also use the male pronouns for ease of understanding but recognize that both genders share the same characteristics.

### How Leaders Build Trust

There are many ways leaders build trust with people in their organization. I contend that establishing a culture of psychological safety is a major way leaders build trust. When there is psychological safety, people know that they can share concerns or issues with the leader and not have to fear being punished in any way.

Another foundation to build trust is to be consistent with a set of agreed-upon values. Great leaders work with their teams to define the values of the group and then **always** follow those values. Not doing so would be inconsistent, and that would destroy trust.

### A Different Angle

On the flip side, it is not essential that leaders always be **predictable**. Once trust is established, the leader has the opportunity to experiment with different styles when reacting to situations as long as the values are not compromised in any way.

The leader has the opportunity to operate outside his normal pattern in a specific situation and not destroy trust. This flexibility allows leaders to grow in their skill base while still maintaining trust with the team.

## Typical Example

For example, let's take a manufacturing situation where some defective product is getting out to customers. The leader has a style that is normally very data-driven when problems surface. He is patient and deliberate about researching the facts before arriving at an action plan.

That pattern does not have to be followed rigidly regardless of the severity of a problem. If people were not attacking an issue with enough urgency, the leader could show more anxiety to get to the root cause than he normally might. That action might be in response to a group value of always putting the customers' needs above personal comfort.

In this case, trust will not be lost because the leader was operating under the values even though it meant being more impatient for a solution than he typically would. In fact, the higher intensity might have taught some people on the team that the leader will flex his style in order to pursue the values.

Bob Whipple is CEO of Leadergrow, Inc. an organization dedicated to growing leaders. Website [www.leadergrow.com](http://www.leadergrow.com) BLOG [www.thetrustambassador.com](http://www.thetrustambassador.com) He is author of the following books: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*

