

Building Higher Trust 61 Be Consistent

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One critical skill for leaders to have in order to build trust is consistency. People need to see you operating from a set of principles that are 1) easy to understand, 2) easy to remember, and 3) easy to observe.

Earlier in this series, I wrote about the relationship of [Trust and Consistency](#). In this article, I will expand the topic to cover more information on how abiding

by the values builds higher trust.

Relationship to Values

The best way to demonstrate consistency is to have a visible set of values that are easy for people to observe. Values are a fundamental underpinning for any organization. Spend time with your team generating a set of 4-6 values that are easy for people to remember. Sometimes you can find an acronym that helps people remember the values.

For example, my personal values spell the word LIGHT. They are Loyalty, Integrity, Generosity, Honesty, and Trust. Because of the acronym, I can always remember my values. Now comes the tricky part.

When Values Do You the Most Good

When following the values is easy, you just act them out in real time. It helps sometimes to verbalize why you are taking a specific action as a result of one of your values. On the flip side, the values do you the most good when following them is challenging. If following the values would be expensive or time consuming, then to follow them would show constancy of purpose. It also demonstrates to your people that you really do mean the values.

Example of Inconsistency

I was once in the lobby of a manufacturing plant and read a chart on the wall of the organization's values. The number one value was "People are our most important asset."

I thought to myself how impressive it is to value people over other assets. However, as I interfaced with several managers, I noticed that they were planning to lay off about 20% of their workforce the following week. It turned out there was a down cycle in volume, and they could save a lot of money by getting rid of people. This was proof positive that people were **not** their most important asset.

Unfortunately for them, the employees saw that their leaders said one thing but did something else. It did not take long to figure out why morale in the plant was low and productivity was miserable. There was no trust.

Conclusion

When you take the time to establish values for an organization, you must **always** follow them. It is particularly important to follow the values when doing something else might be easier, more convenient, or more profitable. Values do you the most good when following them is difficult.

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