

## Building Higher Trust 75 Team Behaviors

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Each group of leaders should establish a list of team behaviors they intend to follow as a group. Vaporware and wishy-washy concepts are inadequate. They make it impossible for the team to hold each other accountable for abiding by the rules.

Avoid a long shopping list of 20-30 rules because it becomes too complicated to remember them all. I think 5-7 behavioral rules work well for a management team. One rule I wish every group would adopt is the "Keep it real" rule.

### Keeping it Real

The idea is that we are all on the same team here. We are not here to play games with each other. Trying to impress the other team members is a common tactic of low-performing management groups. Disruptive team members bring down the effectiveness of the entire group by orders of magnitude. I have seen it happen numerous times.

### Example of a Team Behavior

If a team adopts a "Keep it real" rule, then stick to it. One technique is to have a signal to be used when someone forgets to follow the rule. Perhaps it might be a raised index finger or some other recognizable sign that the team has agreed to. The team needs to agree there will be no negative repercussions for anyone giving the sign. This is especially important when it is the boss who is causing the problem.

Having a pre-selected safe signal allows the whole team to police the behaviors. That permission quickly extinguishes the wrong behavior.

## **Example of Team Behavior in Action**

I was once with a team that was world-class at making jokes at the expense of each other. The jokes were digs intended to be in jest and were taken that way on the surface. Unfortunately, there was damage done under the surface when people picked on each other.

They invented a signal to use when someone made a joke at the expense of another person. This was the third item on their list of rules. They elected to use three extended fingers to indicate someone had violated the rule.

## **Result of the Policy**

The results were simply amazing. In less than an hour, the behavior that was ingrained in the team's makeup was totally extinguished. It only took a couple of times of one member giving the sign to another for people to catch on.

The results in this group were transformational. The little barbs stopped, and from that point on, the tone of the group was much more supportive. They still had fun and made jokes; they just did not do it at the expense of others.

## **Conclusion**

Take the time with your team to invent some behavioral rules. Also, invent some kind of signal to give if people ignore the rules. You will find that it can make a big difference in the culture of the entire team.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.

