

Building Higher Trust 93 Reinforce Trust Behaviors

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Reinforce the behaviors that enhance trust within your organization. You need to encourage people to use these behaviors more often. Doing so will cause more people to practice them, and you will move your entire organization toward higher trust.

Reinforcement lesson from literature

In his book [“Whale Done.”](#) Ken Blanchard stresses an idea about reinforcement. If you want more of a certain behavior, you need to reinforce the people who do it. The idea is to catch someone doing something right and make them feel good about it.

Application to trust behaviors

The positive reinforcement technique is particularly effective at enhancing trust within organizations. Leaders should preach and model the technique to shift the culture toward higher trust.

Examples of trust behaviors for clarity

Let’s focus on some examples that help illustrate how powerful this technique is at shaping the culture of a group. Here are six behaviors to reinforce:

1. **Admit mistakes** – When people humbly admit a mistake, it usually enhances trust rather than reduces it. The reason is that many people try to hide their mistakes to avoid embarrassment. Exceptions include if the same mistake has been made before or if the mistake has a sinister intent.
2. **Do what you say** – Consistency between words and actions is a way to enhance trust.
3. **Tell the truth** – People recognize when they get straight facts, even if the news isn’t good. They appreciate the honesty.
4. **Be transparent** – People appreciate knowing what is going on. If managers try to hide things, trust goes down.
5. **Demonstrate care** – When managers show they truly care about their people, it goes a long way toward enhancing trust.

6. **Adhere to the values** – If people see the values modeled in everyday interactions, it helps entrench their validity.

There are hundreds of other examples I could cite, but I kept the list short for brevity. The point is that when leaders reinforce people when they do things that enhance trust, it tends to strengthen it.

Trust behaviors form the basis of your culture

Do not overlook this method of enhancing trust within your group. Look for opportunities to model the technique. Don't forget to thank other people when they take the time to praise others who are reinforcing trust behaviors. The whole concept becomes a circle of support that really matters in the long run. It is the best method of building a high trust culture.

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