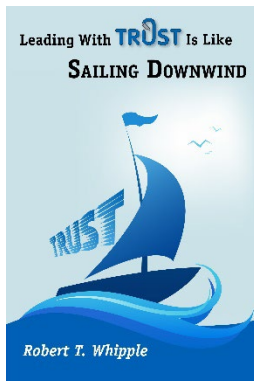


## Building Higher Trust 119 Sailing Downwind

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



I have written about the work of several other authors in this series on trust. It might be appropriate to summarize my own body of knowledge on the topic. In 2009 I published my third book entitled, *Leading With Trust is like Sailing Downwind*.

### Sailing Downwind: Central Theme of the book

Leaders who know how to build a culture of high trust have a huge advantage. It is like steering a boat in the direction the wind is already blowing. Leaders who cannot maintain high trust sail into the wind. In that configuration, you make less progress while “tacking” and the work is more difficult.

My observation comes after years of contrasting leaders who know how to maintain trust with those who don't. The former are having a blast while the latter are miserable most of the time.

### The most important skill for sailing downwind

To build a culture of high trust, ensure people feel **psychological safety**. They know that they can say what they believe without any fear of retribution. Leaders who can accomplish this feeling have the most direct route to trust.

### Several other observations from the book

1. **Trust is the foundation of effective leadership.** Leaders who build and maintain trust are more likely to achieve success in their roles. Trust is essential for building strong relationships, creating a positive work culture, and fostering innovation and collaboration.
2. **Trust is earned through consistent behavior.** You are not given trust; it is earned through consistent behavior over time. Leaders must be transparent, ethical, and authentic in their actions and decisions.
3. **Trust is a two-way street.** It is bilateral. Leaders must trust their employees as well. When they demonstrate trust in their employees, it will inspire greater

loyalty and commitment. In turn, employees will be more likely to reciprocate with increased productivity and engagement.

4. **Communication is key to building trust.** Leaders must communicate clearly, honestly, and frequently to establish open and honest relationships with their employees.
5. **Trust can be damaged quickly.** While trust takes time to build, it can be damaged quickly by even small missteps or lapses in judgment. Leaders must be vigilant in their actions and decisions to maintain trust and avoid eroding it.
6. **Trust is essential for navigating change.** It is especially critical during times of change, uncertainty, and crisis. Leaders who have established trust with their employees will be better equipped to navigate difficult situations. They can maintain morale and productivity during challenging times.

## Conclusion

If you know how to build, maintain, and repair trust, you are sailing downwind most of the time. Leadership for you will be a blast rather than a chore.

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