

3 Keys for Building Trust in Your Leadership

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Trust in leadership is on a decline¹. There are several reasons for this, and the purpose of this white paper is to identify areas where leaders can focus to bring higher levels of trust.

The first question we should ask is, "Why is trust so important in an organization"? I believe that answer is in this quote from Sissela Bok, author of *Lying*²:

Trust is a social good to be protected just as much as the air we breathe or the water we drink. When it is damaged, the community as a whole suffers; and, when it is destroyed, societies falter and collapse...Trust and integrity are precious resources, easily squandered, hard to regain.

According to Patrick Lencioni's model "[The Five Dysfunctions of a Team](#)," trust is the foundation for all relationships. The workplace is all about people and relationships and that is why trust is crucial to the success of any organization.

So why is trust declining? There are three key reasons for declining trust:

1. Lack of vision
2. Fitting into the strategy
3. Uncertainty of values

Let's break these key reasons down one at a time. The first is lack of vision or lack of understanding of the vision. An ancient Hebrew proverb says,

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

People need to know the vision of where the organization is headed and see a clear line of how to get there. Carly Fiorina said,

¹ <http://www.ibew1613.org/library/notrust.html>

² Bok, Sissela. *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. Vintage Books, 1999.

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A leader's greatest obligation is to make possible an environment where people's minds and hearts can be inventive, brave, human and strong... where people can aspire to change the world.

This leads us to the second reason people are losing trust in their leadership: Understanding how they fit into the strategy. Employees not only need to understand the vision and hear it on a regular basis, but they need to understand how the work they are doing connects to the vision. In other words, how does the strategy of what I do each day connect to the overall vision of the organization? An organization's strategy should show up in:

- 1. Knowing the priorities**
- 2. Understanding opportunities and challenges**
- 3. Investing resources - time, talent and finances**

I am always shocked by leaders who want to withhold information, seemingly to keep power for themselves. Unfortunately, the results could not be more opposite. What happens is that the leaders who do this not only lose the trust of their people, but they also lose respect and productivity. People work harder when they understand and connect with the vision and the strategy.

The third reason for declining trust is uncertainty of values. We see this in two places, the values of the organization and the values of the leader a person works for. From the organizational standpoint, employees need to know what the organization does and why. They need to know what the values are that connect them to what the organization does, even if the "what we do" changes. Employees also need to know the organization has a public purpose that connects them to the greater good. Jim Collins said,

The fundamental distinguishing dynamic of enduring great companies is that they preserve a cherished core ideology while simultaneously stimulating progress and change in everything that is not part of the core ideology.

From the leadership standpoint, employees need to know the values their leader holds and how they show up in his or her leadership. In order for this to happen, the leader has to first identify these values for themselves (self-awareness) and then make sure they are consistently showing up in their leadership (self-management)³. Consistency is key in building trust.

As a leader, you can bring great strength to the foundation of your organization and the team you lead through focusing on the three key principles listed in this white paper.

³ Robert Galford & Regina Fazio Maruca, Your Leadership Legacy. Harvard Business School Publishing, 2006.

Motivational Monday White Paper Questions:

1. Identify the vision of your organization/team (or both) and clearly communicate that to your team this week.
2. Identify how the priorities of what your team does (down to each individual) affects/lines up with the vision and share with your team.
3. Ask your team members how they see the work they are doing each day fitting into the overall strategy of the company.
4. What are the key values of the organization? Ask your team members how the work they do aligns with the organization's values. Ask your team members how their values align with the organization's values.
5. Identify 3 key values you hold and how they show up in your leadership. How can you be sure you are being consistent in living/leading from your values? Communicate your key values to your team.

Reflective Fridays:

1. How did you do communicating the vision to the team? Did everyone seem clear on the vision? Was anyone surprised?
2. How did your team respond when you shared how the priorities align with the organization's values? Were you pleased with this?
3. What sort of answers did you get from your team members with your Monday question? Do you need to better clarify the strategy? Do you clearly understand the strategy?
4. What sort of feedback did you receive on how team members see their values aligning with the values of the organization? How did your team members see their work aligning with the values of the organization?
5. How did your team respond when you shared your values with them? Were you able to identify ways to be more consistent in living/leading from your values?

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