



What is trust? What must a leader do to be viewed as trustworthy by her/his employees? What factors contribute to a high level of trust on a team?

To help leaders think about the topic of trust I use an equation to set a working definition. **T=C+I. Trust equals Credibility plus Intimacy.** This equation provides an easy framework for leaders interested in being trustworthy and building trust on a team. When you break the equation down it identifies what is required of an individual leader who wants to be known as trustworthy.

Credibility speaks to the importance of leaders doing what they say they will do. I often tell leaders their employees study them like science projects. They know your every move. They decide whether or not to trust you based on these observations over time. It is important for leaders to be consistent in word, action, and deed. I refer to this as understanding the perception of your patterns of word and deed alignment. In short, does your body consistently follow what your mouth is saying? When it does, these repeated behaviors say something about who you are and support people's ability to trust you. This opens the door for the next component of the trust equation intimacy.

Intimacy speaks to the importance of leaders allowing themselves to be known and understood by people in the workplace. This does not mean leaders have to share all their personal business. It does however encourage leaders to let people know who they are and what they stand for in relationship to the workplace. Building intimacy requires a leader to be open to questions, comments, concerns and respectful criticism. Intimacy develops when leaders share goals, values and beliefs with colleagues and employees. Intimacy leads to relationship building and relationships really matter when it comes to building trust.

Understanding the connection between credibility and intimacy is important to the individual leader desiring to be known as trustworthy. It is also the leader's task to set the tone for trust on a team. Given this, it is helpful to be aware of team trust building and maintaining behaviors:

- establishing and maintaining integrity between and among team members
- communicating vision and values for the team
- considering all employees as equal partners
- focusing on shared not personal goals for team members
- doing what's right for the team even when there may be personal risk

Research on leadership has found the absence of trust leads to team dysfunction. Behavior that destroys trust on a team:

- acting and speak inconsistently
- withholding information
- lying or telling half- truths
- being closed minded

High performing teams have a high level of trust between the leader and the team, and between and among team members. On these teams trust is a business resource that is treated the same as other important business resources.

If you are interested in improving as a leader and/or developing a high performance team don't forget to include the topic of trust in this process. **Trust is the glue that bonds a leader to a team and the team together.**