**Workplace Trust: A Key Ingredient to an Engaged Team**

When it comes to the issue of employee engagement in an organization creating a sense of trust is one of the key factors. Trust forms the basis of all relationships and interactions. It is just as important in professional relationships as it is in personal ones.

A company that is able to create a strong sense of trust in the workplace will perform better, especially during uncertain times and will have a clearer picture of the company vision and what the company stands for.

**Why Is Trust Important in The Workplace?**

Successful businesses are built on relationships. Relationships between employers and employees, staff and customers, internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. At the foundation of all relationships is trust. Without each party trusting one another the ability to come to an agreement or consensus on an issue is always going to be compromised.

If a workplace is able to foster a strong sense of trust within their organization, they can see a number of benefits including:

* Increased productivity amongst staff
* Improved morale amongst employees and staff
* The ability to work more effectively as a team, rather than individuals
* Reduce the time to make and discuss key issues as each individual trust in the judgement and expertise of their colleagues.

**Trust is a Currency**

Trust is like a workplace currency in that its value is demonstrated through exchange – it is given, and it is received. We can see employee trust as it demonstrated through employees’ behavior. This is also true for leadership.

Trust leads to increased employee engagement and productivity. While the idea that trust translates into better business outcomes was once somewhat controversial, numerous studies have since proved it be true in measurable outcomes.

Research by Form cites 10 years of studies finding that organizations which put a priority on trust have some major advantages:

* 16% greater profit margin
* 19%geater operating margin
* 18% greater productivity
* 2.6 times the earning-per-share growth of less-trusting companies.

High trust translates to the bottom line.

**How to Build Trust in The Workplace?**

Trust is built through actions not words. As a Manager or Leader in an organization you can’t just say you “trust” a particular employee or team, you need to show that you do through the actions you take on a daily basis.

In addition to the trust you show to your team you must also enable trust to flow between employees, teams and departments. You can help build trust in the workplace by:

* Empowering staff to “own” their day to day responsibilities.
  + Setting realistic and clear expectations or goals
  + Providing timely feedback on performance and achievement of goals
* Allowing teams to make decisions and put together their own proposals that they believe benefit the business.
  + This results in greater employee commitment
  + Execution of plans will be faster and less costly
* Being open, clear, and transparent on key decisions/ changes to business process or procedure. (See Communication is a Key Component of Trust)
* Refrain from treating anyone or any team more favorably than another. Call out success when it is warranted by don’t anyways focus the attention on one particular person or team.
* Deal promptly with problem employees. Nothing can destroy trust faster than failing to deal with employees who lack the character or competency to meet the values and expectations of the organization

Finally, you should understand your employees’ expectations of you. It is easy for a lack of trust to develop when an employee feels that the employer has unrealistic expectations of them, and they don’t believe they are ever able to achieve their goals.

**Communication is a Key Component of Trust**

Organizational transparency is strongly connected to employee trust. That’s what one study of a U.S. healthcare organization found.:

“As organizations become for transparent, they will also become more trusted”

Communication: consistent, timely, open, and transparent sharing of information with employees, especially when are there problems, goes a long way in building trust. Share good news, and don’t hide the problems. Employees have a vested interest in any plans that involve changes in the way you do business. Keep them informed and ask for their feedback where appropriate. Remember, involving employees in decisions that affect their work will result in their commitment to the action to be taken, and better execution of these plans.

**What to do if Trust Has Been Broken**

Trust between people within an organisation can be lost within an instance. Rebuilding that trust isn’t always an easy process. What this really highlights is how important it is to maintain trust with one another once you have it. If, however, you find yourself in a situation where you have lost the trust of your employees how do you regain it?

The most important thing to do in order to rebuild trust is take ownership of the mistake or issue. You need to clearly communicate that you understand why your employees have lost trust in you and acknowledge the mistake(s) you made. Communicate clearly and openly with everyone involved, and it is best to do this in person. Avoid e-mails and telephone calls whenever possible.

After you have got past the acknowledgement phase you need to show how you are going to rectify the situation and put in processes to ensure it won’t happen again in the future. Some common ways to assist with this process are:

* Creating an open-door policy where staff can communicate with you about their concerns without any fear of judgement or retribution.
* Taking proactive action to involve yourself in understanding the issues that led up to the loss of trust between you and your team.
* Seek the advice or counsel from other leaders in the company that you trust. If necessary, have them mediate for you between the various employees, or teams affected.
* Show that you have changed your management or leadership style in wake of these developments. Action always speaks lower than words.

Finally, depending on the level of trust loss or the underlying issue you need to acknowledge that some staff may feel angry or aggrieved for some period of time. You may not just be able to say sorry and get straight back to where you were before. Don’t rush the process, give your staff and team time and if you are sincere in your approach eventually you will regain their trust.