

GAINING EMPLOYEE TRUST

“The boss is an idiot.”

“These are my rights.”

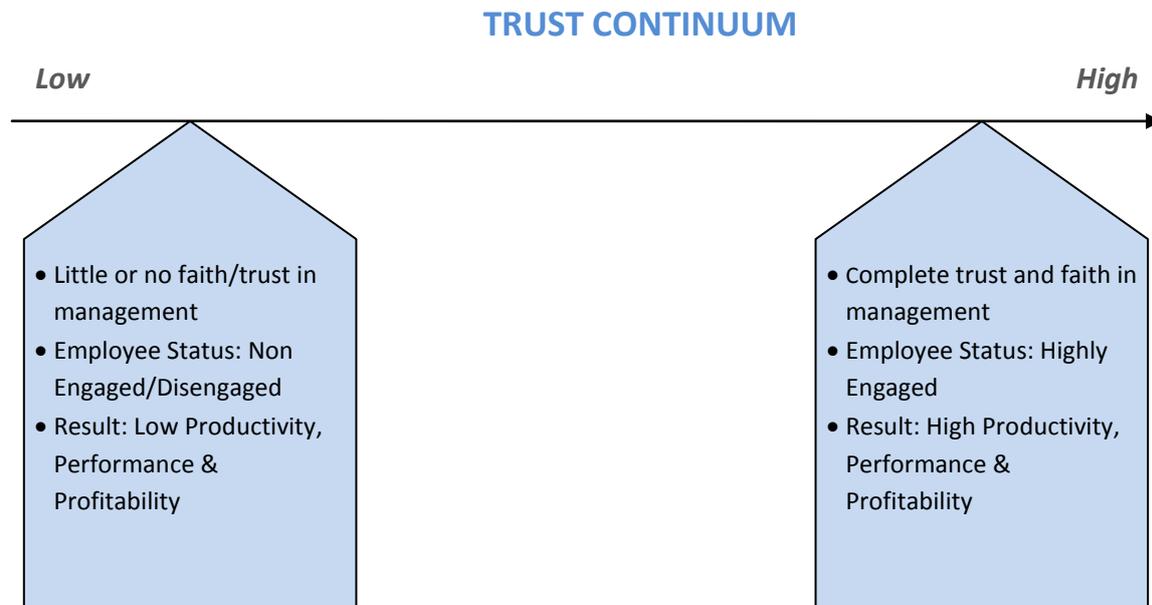
“I wouldn’t trust him at all.”

“She’s just looking out for herself.”

“I get paid pittance and look at him driving around in his flash car.”

Statements of mistrust and disillusionment from employees.

The business trust culture ranges from no trust in management (often resulting in both non engaged and disengaged employees) right through to full trust with high engagement and productivity as per the graphic below.



It All Starts With Management

Some time ago I consulted to two companies within the same industry in close proximity to each other. Company ABC Pty Ltd were experiencing some of the following:

- High turnover of employees
- Challenge to employ good staff
- Theft
- Infighting and employee disgruntlement
- Low profitability
- Culture of pessimism and mistrust

Company XYZ Pty Ltd on the other hand were experiencing:

- Long term tenure of staff
- Highly satisfied employees
- Culture of optimism and trust
- High productivity
- Reasonable profitability

Given that both companies were so similar and existed within the same economic environment, it was exceedingly apparent that what I observed outwardly was a reflection purely of leadership. One company was led by someone who was constantly complaining about how hard things were and about the idiots they had working for them. The other business owner demonstrated gratitude and an abundance mentality around his people and also the ability to hire good people if need be. The outward results were a direct reflection of the thinking, attitudes and actions of the leader.

The Art Of Building Trust

Be Personable

The number one issue when it comes to building trust is for management to be personable. It doesn't mean being someone's best buddy but it does mean being personally accessible. Accessibility for building trust comes in two forms.

1. Being physically present and available.

Management from the shop floor will go a long way to building trust as opposed from behind a closed door. For employees to gain trust, the knowledge that they can approach you as manager is essential; to see you at their level, engaging personally contributes greatly for others to feel they can trust you.

2. Being emotionally available

Many leaders are emotionally unavailable. They manage according to purely meeting the companies and customers requirements and goals, forgetting that the team they are working with are people (as opposed to workers). These people have lives outside of work, a myriad of motivations, personal standards and personalities, significant life challenges and the like. Good management is about being good with people and one of the traits of excellent leaders is the ability to understand their people at an emotional level.

Be Interested

Part of a consulting project I was engaged in was dealing with the conflict between a manager and his subordinate. The manager was emotionally disconnected from both himself and others. His subordinate was a highly engaged people person. He was about systems and process, she needed to engage personally with others to give her work meaning and produce the required KPI's. She would ask him every Monday morning what he did on the weekend. He said to me privately, "I don't give a f#%k about her weekend, I just want her to do the job." No interest, no connection, no personal care factor.

Take an interest in your people. Whether it was about their weekend, their family, their hobbies and interests, these simple expressions of interest build rapport and trust, taking you from a manager to be distrusted and feared to one who team members will gladly trust and follow.

Raise the Bar

Here is a simple formula for building trust based on increasing expectations.

1. Understand your people - skills, talents, goals, ambitions etc.
2. Define with the person the next stage in their development and progress
3. Work *with* the employee to reach the new bar height with ongoing *honest* critique along the way

This simple method expresses to the employee that you value them and consider them to be worthy of progression within the company. Your belief in them as manager builds their own self belief and thus the increase in trust. Your honest appraisal of them along the way and also knowing that you are working alongside of them goes a long way to building a highly performing individual.

Ray Hodge speaks and consults to businesses and organisations, a notable event being the Department of the Australian Prime Minister and Cabinet. His emphasis is on improving critical efficiencies to dramatically increase key results. He has coached and provided consulting services to leaders and teams for over 25 years.