



Building the Best Organizations in the Insurance Industry

IN THE WORKPLACE, TRUST IS FRAGILE

By: Tom Ziglar

Trust in the workplace is fragile. Companies and their leaders have added to the inherent suspicion people carry for their bosses by using the terms trust, teamwork, and transparency as buzz words. They hire consultants, hold special meetings, or do team-building and trust-building exercises. Then everyone goes right back to what they were doing before the feel-good exercise, nothing changes, and skepticism and distrust prevail. What is missing in these often empty exercises is that trust is personal. It is emotional. It is earned. It is a foundation that is built—one brick at a time.

In leadership building, maintaining trust in relationships with your people means providing consistent evidence that you can be trusted. Evidence—not empty buzzwords and slogans. Steven R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, likens building trust to making deposits in an “Emotional Bank Account.” Using this metaphor, Covey explains that you build trust by making regular deposits (consistent evidence that you are trustworthy) in another person’s emotional bank account. As you make deposits, like keeping commitments and delivering on promises, the balance of trust in the account grows. When you fail to honor commitments, renege on promises, make the other person feel unimportant or unappreciated, behave in an unlikeable or inconsistent way, you make withdrawals. The theory is, by making regular deposits, trust will be maintained, and there will be greater tolerance for your future indiscretions and mistakes—which you will make, because no matter how hard you try you’ll never be perfect. However, like any bank account, when you make too many withdrawals and allow your account balance to get low or become overdrawn, you lose trust and place the relationship in jeopardy.

Though many factors contribute to the trust your people have in you, the important takeaway from this metaphor is that in leadership, trust is something you earn. In Covey’s metaphor, each relationship begins with a neutral balance. I argue that in twenty-first-century business the trust that employees have for managers has deteriorated to such an extent that these relationships always begin in the red. Until trust is established, each party in the relationship is suspicious of the real motivations of the other party. Because of this, you are almost always starting off in a hole with your people. This is why you must lay a foundation of trust with consistent evidence that you can be trusted.

How important is trust? Consider these findings from a 2010 Maritz Research poll

(www.greatleadershipbydan.com/2010/04/new-poll-employees-dont-trust-their.html). The study found that employees with a high degree of trust in their leaders were significantly happier, more committed, less likely to leave the company, and looked forward to coming to work more than those who did not trust their leaders. This translates to higher productivity.

- Fifty-eight percent with strong trust in their management were completely satisfied with their job, while only four percent of respondents with weak trust in management cited they were completely satisfied with their job.
- Sixty-three percent of respondents with strong trust in their management would be happy to spend the rest of their career with their present company. This compares to only seven percent of respondents who have weak trust in management.

www.gsr4you.com

Sales: 233 S. Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606 312.922.6664

Administrative: 13368 W. Heiden Circle Drive, Lake Bluff, IL 60044 847.735.0525 Fax: 847.735.1205



Building the Best Organizations in the Insurance Industry

- Fifty-one percent with strong management trust would invest money in their company if they could versus only six percent of those surveyed with weak management trust.
- Fifty percent of those with strong trust in their management looked forward to coming to work every day while only three percent of respondents with weak management trust looked forward to coming to work.

Trust is the foundation on which your success as a leader rests. Every action, decision, and behavior links back to and directly impacts trust—positively or negatively. Simply put, you will never gain the success you desire without the trust of your people. You will not consistently achieve your business objectives.

Without trust your people will not give you their best work. Without trust, there is no loyalty. People won't watch your back when the chips are down. The best people will not want to work for you. You will not earn promotions or raises. Without trust, your reputation suffers. The bottom line is no matter how likeable you are or how connected you are, how many wins your people get, or how many nice things you do, you absolutely, positively cannot lead without trust.

-Tom Ziglar, Ziglar, Inc.
