

Trust is About Making and Keeping Behavioral Commitments

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Here are the specific steps in an effective and proven method for building, restoring or maintaining trust between yourself and another person at work:

- Carefully review the 27 trust-building behaviors described on the following pages.
- Think about a person you report to, supervise or work with as a peer in whom you have less trust than you would like.
- Identify at least one trust-building behavior on the list that you think this person clearly violated in their dealings with you (preferably in the *recent* past).
- Think about the incident or situation, what the person said or did, how it affected your trust in the person, and what alternative behavior you would have preferred from the person.
- If you have never discussed this incident or situation with the person from a trust perspective, consider initiating such a discussion.
- If you decide have this discussion, share the list of trust-building behaviors with the person. **Describe** the particular situation or incident, what the person said or did and which of the trust-building behaviors you think it violated. **Acknowledge** what the person's behavior in that situation made you think or feel. **Specify** the alternative behavior you would prefer from the person in similar situations in the future. **Show** how the alternative behavior will help restore or strengthen your work-related trust in the person. End on the following positive note: **Reassure** the person you are confident the two of you can get past the trust issue "...if each of us keeps in mind how what we say and do affects our working relationship."
- Now think about a person you report to, supervise or work with as a peer who probably has less trust in you than you would like.
- Identify at least one trust-building behavior on the list that you think you clearly violated in your dealings with this person (preferably in the *recent* past).
- Think about the incident or situation, what you said or did, how it probably affected the person's trust in you, and what alternative behavior you could have used to achieve your objective that the person probably would have preferred.
- If you have never discussed this incident or situation with the person from a trust perspective, consider initiating such a discussion.

- If you decide to have this discussion, share the list of trust-building behaviors with the person. **Describe** the particular situation or incident, what you said or did and which of the trust-building behaviors you think you probably violated from this person's perspective. **Ask** what your behavior in that situation made the other person think or feel, what alternative behavior the person would prefer from you in similar situations in the future, and how the alternative behavior will help restore or strengthen the person's work-related trust in you. If you can confidently **commit** to the alternative behavior for which the person has expressed a preference, then do so. Otherwise, **offer** another alternative behavior you *can* confidently commit to that will also help to restore or strengthen the person's work-related trust in you. End on the same positive note suggested in Step 6 above: **Reassure** the person you are confident the two of you can get past the trust issue "...if each of us keeps in mind how what we say and do affects our working relationship."

- ***Twenty-Seven Behaviors That Earn and Preserve Trust***

1. Inform the other person in advance about actions or events you have planned that affect their goals or interests so that the other person will not be surprised or feel "tricked" or betrayed.
2. Communicate openly and directly with the other person, expressing all of your relevant goals and interests and sharing all other relevant information.
3. Maintain contact and keep the lines of communication open with the other person, even in the face of serious ongoing differences or disagreement.
4. When disagreement with the other person becomes volatile, defer face-to-face meetings until both of you have had time to "cool off."
5. Carefully consider the impact of your own words and actions on the other person and on your relationship with the other person.
6. Focus on interests rather than positions, and on issues rather than personalities.
7. Always consult the other person *before* making a decision or taking an action that materially affects one or more of the other person's goals or interests.
8. Use facts and logic rather than values or beliefs to support your assertions.
9. Be specific. For example, use illustrative examples or exemplary models to clarify and specify exactly what you mean.
10. Verify that you and the other person agree on the meaning of important words.
11. Explain the reasons behind your statements, questions and actions.
12. Invite questions and comments immediately after you make a major statement.

13. Test your observations, inferences and assumptions about the other person's motives *before* acting on them. For example, rather than assuming you know what the other person was actually thinking, *ask* the other person *why* they said what they said or did what they did; then accept their explanation as *the truth* until and unless you acquire factual evidence that proves otherwise.
14. Understand that persons at different organizational levels or with different organizational functions and responsibilities are rewarded for playing different roles; avoid misinterpreting such role-playing (within reasonable bounds) as an automatic indicator of the other person's disloyalty, hostility or bad faith.
15. Be willing and able to *agree not to agree* with the other person openly on an issue without harboring ill will or engaging in recrimination, retaliation or reprisals of any kind.
16. Avoid taking "cheap shots" at or otherwise talking down to or about the other person.
17. Be willing and able to discuss so-called un-discussable issues. For example, avoid creating or accepting "sacred cows."
18. Jointly design objective, data-driven methods for testing the comparative merits of your and the other person's competing views or proposals.
19. Remain unconditionally constructive even when the other person does not. For example, consistently "model" the constructive behavior that you prefer from the other person and avoid responding in kind to what you perceive as the other person's unconstructive behavior.
20. Treat each individual issue or problem on its own intrinsic merits independent of other issues or problems, except when interdependencies have a clearly demonstrable influence on satisfactory resolution of the problem. For example, favor win-win or integrative solutions over lose-lose compromises or give-get swaps.
21. Treat each individual idea, suggestion or work product on its own intrinsic merits independent of its source or authorship. For example, avoid dismissing out of hand and without open-minded and objective consideration any idea, suggestion or work product based solely on *who originated it*.
22. Value your relationship with the other person as an absolute plus independent of the desired outcomes it may *or may not* produce.
23. Treat your promises and agreements seriously and take all reasonable steps to keep your promises and adhere to your agreements.
24. Alert the other person explicitly, in advance and as soon as possible when unanticipated events or circumstances or unintentional mistakes or misjudgments make it impossible for you to honor a prior promise or agreement, and take all reasonable steps to "hold harmless" or "make whole" the other person's adversely affected goals or interests.

25. Avoid using data, information or knowledge to entrap, discredit, compromise, embarrass, attack, mislead, control or coerce the other person.
26. Initiate *ad hoc* one-on-one discussion(s) directly and in a timely manner with any superior, subordinate or peer whose behavior toward you is clearly inconsistent with one or more of these trust building behaviors. For example, use *ad hoc* meeting(s) with the other person to discuss what you think is the trust-violating behavior, and act on the results of the discussion(s) as necessary and appropriate.
27. Reserve a portion of any regular meetings with your manager, subordinates or peers for discussion and assessment of *how you are treating each other in relation to these trust building behaviors* (positive and negative experiences, acknowledgments and apologies as appropriate, change issues and commitments, and so forth).