

10 best ways to build trust among your employees



Surveys consistently show that lack of trust in management is one of the main reasons employees disengage from their work and seek jobs elsewhere.

Earning employees' trust is a key part of being a successful leader. In the long run, it's difficult—if not impossible—to be an exceptional manager without employee trust.

The problem: Many employees are predisposed to mistrust managers, often because of bad experiences with bosses at other jobs.

Leaders can't buy loyalty; they have to earn it. So here are 10 ways managers can work to earn trust from their employees:

1. Speak and act with consistency. Employees look for management inconsistencies. So do what you tell employees you will do. Inconsistent words and actions create an impression of unpredictability.

2. Don't live in your office. You may feel you're too busy to communicate, but the resulting aloofness can breed suspicion and distrust.

Silence from a manager typically leads to uncertainty. And uncertainty creates a void. Unless a manager fills that void with clear communication, employees will assume the worst. Negativity and rumors will fill in the gaps.

Advice: Don't let your busy schedule get in the way of talking to your team. Make communicating with employees a top priority each day.

Walk around and talk to employees on their "turf." It will help you become more approachable. Don't ask employees to meet in your office only to resolve problems.

3. Be honest. Don't hold back information that the company entitles employees to know. Don't start to explain something to employees and hesitate or stop. If you can't answer a question, then explain why. Employees share stories and perceived dishonesty can become part of institutional memory.

4. Share your vision. It's not enough to just be optimistic. It's better to give your team something to be optimistic about. Share with employees your big-picture goals for them and the department. And constantly reiterate what it will take for both to be successful.

5. Solicit feedback. Employees tend to trust managers who value input from subordinates. Create an environment in which employees feel free to voice their opinions. Listen patiently to employees and implement suggestions that increase efficiency and productivity.

6. Involve employees in decision-making. When workers have input on both the big and small decisions, they'll feel more a part of the team and, thus, more trusting of the organization.

7. Be fair. It's human to like some people more than others. However, recognize your feelings and don't let them influence how you manage, evaluate and communicate with employees.

8. Acknowledge that employees have lives outside of work. Managers who get to know the person—not just the employee—have an easier time gaining the respect and trust of their workers. Know their hobbies, names of their family members and favorite sports teams.

9. Admit obvious mistakes. Silently ignoring or covering up errors damages trust more than admitting them.

10. Criticize privately. Allow employees to make mistakes without being humiliated. Offer constructive criticism in one-on-one meetings, not in front of others. Otherwise, employees may feel vulnerable to receiving criticism any time in any setting.

Finally, trust your employees. It encourages them to trust you in return.

Show staff daily: You're on their side

Good managers earn their subordinates' trust by demonstrating commitment themselves. They pay back loyalty, and they pay it forward. The best bosses:

Stand by their teams. Managers who don't support their workers or appear to compete with them will lose their trust. Stand up for your staff members, particularly if they're criticized unfairly. If you're there for them, they'll be there for you.

Keep an open-door policy. It may not be an official policy, but employees will know if their managers don't have the time or interest in their staffs. For example, failing to respond to employees' emails or interrupting conversations to take phone calls will signal that you have more important things to do than support your team.