

# Put more trust in your team for success

Look up the word “trust” in a dictionary and you’ll get definitions like “to place confidence in” and “to rely on the truthfulness or accuracy of.” When such actions permeate a company’s culture, they set the stage for great things to happen.

“Trust must be at the foundation,” says leadership development specialist Amir Ghannad of The Ghannad Group. “Without it, team members tend to be preoccupied with trying to survive and protect their own interests rather than focusing on doing the work that needs to be done to deliver results and/or improve the work environment for everyone.”

**The value of honest feedback.** Looking to improve trust? Consider starting with better communication. Providing truthful feedback shows that you respect an employee and believe he has the potential to do better when offered thoughtful guidance. (Choose a private setting to avoid any embarrassment from others overhearing.)

For the conversation to be both effective and well received, Ghannad provides this image: “I use the metaphor of a great-tasting glass of lemonade to demonstrate this balance where the lemon represents the courage to deliver tough feedback and the sugar represents the consideration to do it in a caring manner. Too much lemon and you are a dictator. Too much sugar and you just want to be people’s friend and not hurt their feelings.”

Great managers also realize that trust is a two-way street. Soliciting feedback from team members and truly listening to what they say demonstrates commitment to finding solutions. Trust enables people to speak without fear of repercussion.

“Employees need to know that they have a voice. This is the first step to building trust,” says Keri Lindenmuth, marketing manager at KDG. “However, management needs to ensure that they are taking the feedback they are being given and acting on it. This shows that employees are not only given a voice, but being heard.”

**The role of transparency.** Keeping employees in the loop about the company and its operations is another key factor in developing trust. Without access to such information, workers tend to worry, gossip, and fill in the gaps with speculation.

“When employees can trust their team and managers, they feel more confident in their work, perform better as a team, and aren’t afraid to take calculated risks,” says Jacob Dayan, CEO and co-founder of Community Tax and Finance Pal. “However, if you were to put yourself in the position of an employee who never knows what is going on behind their manager’s office door and can never tell when the manager is being honest, the employee would constantly feel uneasy.”

**Restoring trust.** Trust does not happen overnight. Managers and employees alike gain it with the consistency and quality of their words, actions, and performance. Unfortunately, destroying trust can occur much faster. Whether a manager called someone out in front of others, tried to cover up a mistake, or deliberately eliminated some information when discussing a proposed company change, a leader needs to take steps to begin the rebuilding process.

“Be honest in how you messed up. Apologizing and taking ownership goes a long way,” says John Rampton, founder and CEO of Calendar. Then, be ready to follow through on amends and give the healing process time.

“As the old saying goes, actions speak louder than words,” says Monica Parker, founder of HATCH Analytics. “Admit clearly how you broke trust, and give specific actions you’ll take to rebuild it. The key after that point is to do what you say, and realize that even if you did everything right, trust may not return. That is sometimes the price we pay.”