



The Three Dimensions of Leadership Trust

By
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The list of high priority issues confronting most leaders today is by all accounts long and growing. Competition, ROI, Stakeholder Value, Revenue Growth, Employee Engagement, Talent Management, Acquisitions and on and on the list goes. While all of these and more are very real in most organizations, the common denominator influencing a successful response may very well be trust. Leadership trust to be specific. Sure there are other factors at play here but absent trust in your leadership, your capacity to turn these “front burner” issues into opportunities may be limited.

As a beginning point, consider your greatest success of the past year. Was it possible to achieve this success without others? More than likely it was not. There were no doubt a wide range of people who played a supporting role in your success. Your team, peers, boss, customers, vendors and possibly your board too. Trust is the vital element that allows two or more people who work together to know that they can rely on each other implicitly. It is in no small way the driver of collaboration and synergy at its deepest and most powerful level.

Today's changing landscape of work coupled with the overall state of the economy has created both a need and an opportunity for leaders to examine the power of trust and its countless rewards. To be sure, there are as many definitions or interpretations of the word trust as there are people on your team or in your organization. In an effort to build clarity and a framework for consideration, I present what I refer to as the three dimensions of leadership trust.



The first dimension encompasses trust in your skill and capacity to achieve success in your specific role. In this dimension, all of your stakeholders trust that you not only know what you're doing but also that you know where you're going and how you're going to get there. Even more than this, they trust that it's the right direction.

The second dimension of trust encompasses character. In this dimension, your stakeholders trust that everything you do is done with integrity and consistency and that your actions are aligned with the greater good of the organization. This dimension by my estimation may be the most important, as character and integrity represent fundamental elements of true leadership. Beyond these factors, your stakeholders trust that you honor your commitments by consistently doing what you say you will do.

A third dimension that warrants consideration is leadership intention. In this dimension, your stakeholders trust that all that you do is not just good for the organization but also good for each member of the team. It is often that unspoken support that you give to your team that assures them that you are in their corner, doing what it takes to help them succeed. It also encompasses fairness and transparency too. Like leadership character, leadership intention often serves as a guidepost for not only finding the path to true leadership but also being able to stay there.

Building and maintaining your leadership trust capacity is no small task. It is by all accounts, a worthy goal that must be pursued with clarity and purpose. Truly investing the time to explore the impact of your leadership trust may very well be the first step in not only making sense of your "front burner" issues but also being able to tackle the list with a clear outcome in sight.



Five more things that you can do now:

1. Give yourself permission to take a 10 minute “time-out” from your hectic schedule and consider how the three dimensions apply to you in your role as a leader.
2. Initiate a conversation with your peer group or a trusted mentor about the scope and impact of leadership trust and its connection to employee engagement and organizational success.
3. Try to identify other dimensions of leadership trust and look for their connection to leadership excellence.
4. Seek input from your team and other key stakeholders about what leadership trust means to them and look for ways to expand your leadership trust capacity.
5. Invest 3 minutes to complete the free *Leadership Trust Inventory* found on the WorkChoice Solutions web site under Learning Resources. Key words, *Services, Learning Resources, Leadership Assessments.*

About David A. O’Brien

David is President of CT based WorkChoice Solutions, a nationally recognized provider of leadership and team effectiveness consulting services. He works with a wide range of corporate and non-profit clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational effectiveness. His first book, *The Navigator’s Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* was released in July 2008 and is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. His 2nd book, *Tapping Your Leadership Wisdom* is expected in bookstores next year. To learn more, please visit WorkChoice Solutions at www.workchoicesolutions.com or contact David directly at 860.242.1070.