

# Trust Is a Leader's X Factor

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Trust is a leader's X factor to accomplishing things faster, better and with fewer resources. However, trust must be earned. It cannot be taken for granted. A lot of leaders give lip service to wanting to build a trusting environment, but yet they do very little to actually promote it. Establishing a culture of trust takes a top down initiative.

A necessary element in building trust is open communication. People need their leaders to share the company's priorities and what they need to do. As an employee, they want the opportunity to voice their concerns and get their questions answered. When workers feel they are "in the know," they become more satisfied and productive. They contribute ideas that will lead to things like greater efficiency or cost savings.

Some executives think because they have an annual meeting, they are building a trusting environment. Communication that is effective should happen often, whether it is done formally or informally, face to face or virtually. The retiring CEO of RW Baird, Paul Purcell, has promoted open communication throughout his 22 year tenure at RW Baird. He makes a point to respond to any email within 24 hours. One of the reasons people see RW Baird as a great place to work is because employees feel they can communicate all the way to the top and be heard.

When and if there is a crisis, some Executives mistakenly believe the best course of action is not to say anything until everything is known or decided. The opposite is true. Communication should be done early and often; otherwise, the rumor mill will take over. Employees should never hear about their company through the news media. Every employee, whether they are India, China or Chicago, needs to know what the company's situation is and how to respond when asked.

Real leaders build trust through the way they communicate. They walk the talk and create channels of communication that give employees the opportunity to discuss issues of concern at any time. They are open to feedback and solicit it. When they need to listen, they do so objectively. When they respond,

it is in a respectful, non-defensive manner. Trusted leaders demonstrate respect, integrity and compassion in what they say and do. Because of this, their employees are more collaborative and innovative. Their companies are more successful.

**Question:** *Do you feel your leaders have created a trusting environment in which to work? We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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