The Importance of Building Trust in the Workplace

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Trust is a pinnacle of effective leadership but it does not come with your title. Building trust as a leader and throughout your workforce is an ongoing process, and when trust is strong, employees thrive and so does business.

As a leader of your organisation, you must establish trust with your workforce from the outset, and then continue to nurture that trust, especially through times of change and growth.

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Trust is requisite in the workplace so that everyone feels they are there for the right reasons, working toward shared goals with a sense of purpose. However, according to the Officevibe data, 19% of employees do not feel that their organisation trusts them to contribute to its mission

When team members trust one another, they feel safe to share their ideas and conflict becomes productive. Trust between employees and their managers lead to improved performance and strengths-based employee development. Ultimately, with a workforce that trusts in your leadership, everyone is better aligned around a shared mission, common goals, and the strategy that will take you there.

The Harvard Business Review finds that employees working in high-trust environments report:

- 74% less stress,
- 50% higher productivity,
- 76% more engagement, and
- 70% more alignment with their companies' purpose compared to employees in low-trust environments.

Officevibe asked their CEO what challenges he faced as a leader while growing his business:

"When a business gets bigger, more and more things are happening at the same time everywhere in the business, and alignment becomes the biggest challenge. You can't be involved in everything anymore…and you lose track of very subtle things that are important." – **Simon De Baene**

When companies grow, leaders risk becoming disconnected from their people, which can influence levels of trust throughout the organization. Here is how to fix it.

How leaders can build trust in the workplace

1. Demonstrate a clear vision

People want to feel that they are a part of something bigger than they are, and your employees depend on you to establish a clear vision, mission, and direction to align around. If you want your employees to get on board with new initiatives and produce meaningful work, you need to be heading in the same direction.

A key to success is to ensure that your leadership teams are aligned, and you are all speaking the same language. Your managers are the ones helping your teams turn the vision into action, and action into output, so make sure they are well equipped with not just a mission statement, but a breakdown of how that translates to their team goals and objectives.

2. Create open lines of communication

You know better than anyone that change is the only constant. As your company scales, building open lines of communication helps you stay tapped into your employees' day-to-day realities and shifting needs. Maintaining a high-level view helps you spot the places where they need support, visibility, or a new approach. When you are responsive to those fluctuations, your employees will trust that you are there to empower them.

3. Practice transparency

Transparency goes hand in hand with effective communication. It does not simply mean sharing everything, all the time; it is about communicating the most pertinent information at the right time and making information easily accessible across your teams.

Your employees do not want to feel like they are the last to know about big changes or shifts in direction. While you have likely had multiple conversations, brainstorms, and prioritization meetings with your leadership team leading up to launching a new initiative, your workforce does not have the same context. Keep them up-to-date with developments in real-time—even better; solicit their feedback as you go.

4. Build relationships throughout your workforce

Trust is a natural by-product of relationship building, and encouraging employees to develop those genuine connections nurtures the psychological safety on your teams. Do not dismiss this idea as fluff too quickly—this feeling of safety enables employees to give and receive constructive feedback, share new ideas, have difficult conversations, raise flags, and challenge the status quo. Each of these factors helps build an environment of continuous learning and development that sparks the kind of creativity and innovation that will set your business apart.

5. Offer trust by default

Trust goes both ways, and if you want your employees to trust you, you need to show that you trust them. When employees are empowered to leverage their strengths and expertise, it gives them the

autonomy to do what they do best (the reason you hired them in the first place). Feeling this trust from leadership nurtures employee loyalty and ambassadorship, which improves retention and bolsters recruitment efforts.

6. Own mistakes and failures

The thing about mistakes is that they are inevitable. Being a great leader does not mean you are immune to failure, but it does mean understanding the power in facing failures head-on (and not avoiding them—or worse, blaming your employees). Acknowledging the problem and coming together with your workforce to find solutions and learn through the process is the best way to ensure mistakes do not repeat themselves, and others are avoided in the future. Taking responsibility shows that you are just as human as the rest of the team and that there is always room for improvement.

7. Seek out feedback, and act on it

Your employees want to know that they have a voice—and that they are being heard. Collecting employee feedback is paramount to understanding your employees' experience, spotting any potential issues early, and gaining insights and new ideas from the different areas of your workforce.

The most important part? Taking action. Turning your employees' feedback into changes, initiatives, or simply talking points is what shows them they have been heard. Knowing that their opinions matter to you strengthens the trust they have in you as a leader, helping you keep your top talent.

8. Give credit where credit is due

True leadership comes with a healthy dose of humility. Just as important as owning failures is giving credit to the talented and hard-working employees who contribute to every win. Your teams come together to turn your vision into a reality, and they deserve to be recognized for their efforts.

Of course, you want to give meaningful recognition promptly to the people on your immediate team, but as your company grows, you also want to foster a culture of recognition. Growth is exciting, but it also means losing visibility on all the incredible things that are happening, so make time to shine a light on achievements and encourage your teams to celebrate their wins.

Leading a company to greatness is not done in a day, and no one said it would be easy. However, when you build strong foundations of trust, your teams will align around the central mission of your organization and put their best foot forward, so you can reach business success—together.

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