



Coaching Works Monthly

It's a Matter of Trust!

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Tools and Tips

When it comes to creating a foundation of trust, you are your most important resource.

If in doubt, ask plenty questions, before stepping out onto the ice. The time, energy, and effort you expend in gathering this important information, will more than pay for itself over the long run.

Food for Thought

"50 percent of time in business is wasted because of lack of trust"

*The late John Whitney,
former Director, Deming
Center for Quality
Management*

It's a Matter of Trust

Exiting a parking garage this morning after a business meeting, I handed the attendant the ticket with a credit card. She said that it was cash only. I looked in my wallet, discovered it was empty, and told her I didn't have any money. She looked me in the eye and said "ATM".



In a moment of awkward silence, I visualized the hassle of backing up, finding a new parking space (cars were backed up like planes over LaGuardia), getting out of the car, rushing off to find an ATM, finding my car again, winding my way back down to the exit, cash in hand, just in time to be late for my next appointment.

I told her I'd be happy to return this afternoon with the money. She glanced at me for a second, smiled, and said, "See ya later". Trust is a wonderful thing.

What is trust? Metaphorically speaking, it's an invisible layer of ice, which provides the foundation needed to more easily, meaningfully, and successfully "skate" through life. If the ice is too thin, we'll lack critical support, fall through, and expend our remaining available energy just trying to survive. If the ice is covered with cracks, bumps, and ruts, we'll lack stability, momentum, and balance, leaving us in a state of reactivity, confusion, and crisis, while stumbling from one rut to the next. When the ice is both solid and smooth, we're free to glide over its surface, more fully able to invest our time, energy, resources, talent, and passion towards that which we are trying to accomplish.

Since trust is relationship driven, it sets the tone for that which can be constructively and meaningfully

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*2007 work/life survey,
Charlotte Chamber of
Commerce*

accomplished through the relationship, whether it's personal or professional. When trust levels are low, communication breaks down, reducing relationship efficiency and productivity. Left unchecked, a silo mentality develops, leaving everyone to fend for themselves. According to the late John Whitney, former Director at the Deming Center for Quality Management, 50 percent of time in business is wasted because of lack of trust. With the divorce rate holding steady at 50 percent, this statistic easily translates from the professional to the personal.

When trust levels are high, ideas, information, energy, and resources are easily exchanged and leveraged towards the greater good of all concerned. Not so surprisingly, this is a highly valued quality in the business world; a 2007 work/life survey taken by the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce identified that trust between employees and management was the single most important attribute of a desirable company to work for.

As a former psychotherapist, building a solid foundation of trust was essential in order to achieve a successful outcome in therapy. As a professional coach, consultant, team-builder, and leadership developer, this remains an indelible truth. Trust and success are inseparable.

Recognizing the difference between thick and thin ice can save a life. Knowing the differences between relationships (whether one-on-one, in marriage, as a group, team, or in business/as a business culture) built on trust, and those where trust is lacking, can be equally as vital in steering the relationship towards solid ground. With that in mind, here are some common signs to be mindful of, when treading near thin "ice".

- Honesty avoided
- Emotions devalued/minimized/dismissed
- Conflicts simmering/unresolved
- Differences viewed as threatening
- Unacknowledged stress/fear/tension lurking beneath surface, i.e., walking on eggshells
- Rigid, reactive, circular, and/or avoidant thinking/behaviors/strategies prevail
- Crisis ongoing
- Band-aid approach to deep-rooted problems
- Relational/organizational secrets/silos

commonplace

- Actions not aligned with stated beliefs/values/goals/mission
- Win-lose mentality

On the other hand, when a solid foundation of trust is present, here is what you should expect:

- Honesty valued
- Emotions acknowledged/effectively expressed
- Differences respected/leveraged towards greater good
- Conflicts acknowledged/resolved directly and effectively
- Problems identified and leveraged as opportunities for growth
- Thinking/feeling outside the box/high degree of creativity/innovation
- Relationships valued
- Actions aligned with stated beliefs/values/vision/mission
- Proactive strategies
- Win-win mentality

Unlike the formation of a solid sheet of ice, in which a prolonged cold spell will do the trick, prolonged cold spells in relationships only breed more layers of mistrust. Next month, we'll discuss some simple yet powerful trust-building and trust-maintenance strategies, designed to afford greater opportunities for success, for all parties involved.

As for the parking garage, I returned later today with the money. The attendant said it was on the house. I gave her a tip, and told her lunch was on me. A small price to pay, for the subject at hand. Here's to your success!

Bob DeMers, President
Coaching Works
Charlotte, North Carolina

bobdemers@coaching-works.net
www.coaching-works.net