Building Trust
Leading Hybrid Teams Tip Sheet

WHY THIS MATTERS
The ability to build trust is a critical competency leaders bring to their team. Teams with a high degree of trust are more productive, engaged, and collaborative. Research has shown that building a culture of trust has a more meaningful impact than "perks," which may boost short-term happiness but fail to have a lasting effect on retention or performance outcomes (Zak. HBR, 2017). Intentional strategies that build trust are important in hybrid teams where proximity may decrease a leader’s visibility and informal opportunities for conversation and connection.

WHAT IS TRUST?
The abstract concept of trust has been defined in many ways. Charles Feltman defines trust as “choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person’s actions (2009).” He identifies four drivers of trust: sincerity, reliability, competence, and care. People tend to trust you when they believe that: you are being honest and acting with integrity; you meet the commitments you make; you have the skills, knowledge and resources to complete a task; and, you have the other person’s interests in mind when making decisions.

KEYS TO SUCCESS
Effective leaders are able to distinguish the rational and emotional components of trustworthiness and are able to identify areas to improve. Using Charles Green’s “Trust Equation” model, consider the 4 variables that impact trustworthiness:

- **Credibility**: Is usually objective, demonstrated in the words and ideas we express. To be credible, it means we believe that the person is competent, capable, and has relevant credentials. We have confidence in their abilities and skills.

- **Reliability**: Is usually objective, demonstrated through actions and behaviour. To be reliable, it means we believe, based on previous interactions, that they will follow through, have shown consistency and are dependable.

- **Intimacy**: Is more subjective and harder to measure as it is emotional risk. It refers to the safety or emotional security or rapport that we feel when entrusting someone with something important and the belief that confidentiality will not be violated.

- **Self-Orientation**: The perception of self-orientation has biggest impact on trustworthiness. It refers to a person’s focus. Is their focus primarily on themselves or others? How selfish or self-obsessed do we believe them to be? Do they care about others or have their own agenda?

HOW TO BUILD TRUST

1. **Be Sincere** | When people sense that you are concealing the truth or being less than authentic, they are less willing to make themselves vulnerable to you. Hold confidences and avoid gossip. Be intentional about what you say to ensure you are being honest and are clearly communicating your priorities. Check in regularly and update your team when you change your mind or circumstances have changed. Strive to be congruent and avoid sending different messages to team members. Acknowledge when you have made a mistake or missed a commitment, and apologize.

2. **Explain Your Logic and Invite Input** | Develop your ability to express your priorities and vision succinctly to communicate a shared purpose and team goals. Build others’ ability to trust you by emphasising your credibility and reliability. Communicate your perspective and the knowledge you used to arrive at your credible opinions and decisions. If you are unable to share information with your team due to confidentiality, let them know this and commit to updating the team when you are able. Invite dialogue when making decisions and clearly communicate how discussion will inform the decision making process.

3. **Practice Care** | Not being fully present in conversations and interactions with others is one of the main detractors from expressing care and building trust. Increase trust with your team by creating psychological safety. Build relationships with your team and ask them about their interests and concerns. Work to understand what your team needs and become their advocate. Show thoughtfulness when expressing yourself by asking yourself whom your comments serve. Model and set expectations that promote being fully present during conversations, such as avoiding multitasking. Establish ground rules with your team that articulate how care and respect will be demonstrated.
Managing a hybrid work environment does not mean learning a new skill set, but it does mean being more intentional with the best management and leadership practices you are already using. Organizations with high trust report many benefits including less stress, more energy, higher engagement, fewer sick days, more satisfaction, and less burnout.

Below are a few resources to sharpen your leadership competencies around building trust:

**Articles**


**Videos**


**Books**


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