THE ALLIANCE OF

TRUSTWORTHY
BUSINESS EXPERTS

Building Trust in the Workplace

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Practical Solutions to Drive Trust and High Performance

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Writer Qualifications

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Andy has spent five years studying trust in the workplace. In his 25 years of business experience, he has consulted with clients in high tech, financial services, transportation, manufacturing, and the public sector, and he has designed a development workshop for business leaders in Building Trust. Andy holds a master's degree in business administration from Columbia University, and is a member of the OD Network. He has published articles on trust, organization development, and quality in numerous publications.

Why Trust?

The importance of trust in the workplace

Effectiveness and High Performance

According to research by Interaction Associates on Building Trust over five years (2009-2013), approximately 80% of employees surveyed report they cannot do an effective job if they do not trust their leaders. This makes trust an essential component of success in today's business world.

Trust and the Bottom Line

Five years of Interaction Associates research into trust shows a strong correlation between financial health and the leadership culture and actions in organizations. Companies adept at reinforcing strong leadership, trust, and collaboration showed better financial performance in each of the survey's five years, as measured by net profit and revenue growth.

Top Five Leadership Actions that Build Trust in the Workplace

The most recent research by Interaction Associates identified the top five actions that leaders take to build trust. They include:

- Set employees up for success by providing tools, resources, and learning opportunities (cited by 41%);
- Provide adequate information around decisions (cited by 41%);
- Seek input prior to making decisions (cited by 40%);
- Consistently act in alignment with the company's values (cited by 35%); and
- Give employees an inspiring, shared purpose to work toward (cited by 28%).

The Trust Ten Test

Leaders need to know where they stand before they can take concerted action with confidence. This Trust Ten Test breaks down the broad topic of trust into bite-size nuggets, and allows you to gauge where trust is strong or lacking in your organization. Additionally, the "Triple-T" shows leaders at all levels how to make progress in building trust fast.

Overview

Many leaders tend to ask "How can I get my people to trust more?" This question assumes the way to improve trust is to change something in your employees. However, the answer may lie in changing something in yourself. A good place to start is with an assessment of your current state. Answer each question "Yes," or "No."

Leaders in my organization…

1. Share the rationale for their decisions
2. Help connect employee actions to the strategy
3. Involve people in decisions that affect them
4. Look for win-win solutions

5. Are consistent and predictable
6. Hold themselves and others accountable
7. Pay attention to how results are achieved

8. Ensure people have the skills to succeed
9. Provide opportunities to learn from experience

10. Provide resources needed to complete tasks

If you answered “Yes” to:

8-10 questions -	You’re a Girl or Boy Scout
5 - 7 questions -	You've got work to do.
Fewer than 5 questions -	You're running a used car lot

Kidding aside, the key thing to remember is that the environment of trust in an organization is a by-product of leadership behaviors. Leaders build trust in three ways, none of which are mutually exclusive:

- Building Alignment
- Providing Accountability and Consistency
- Proving Capability

In the “Trust Ten Test,” questions 1-4 deal with Transparency and Alignment. How well do leaders set direction clearly and help create a sense of shared purpose?

Questions 5-7 deal with Accountability, Consistency and Predictability. Do leaders hold themselves and others accountable for being consistent in their actions and words?

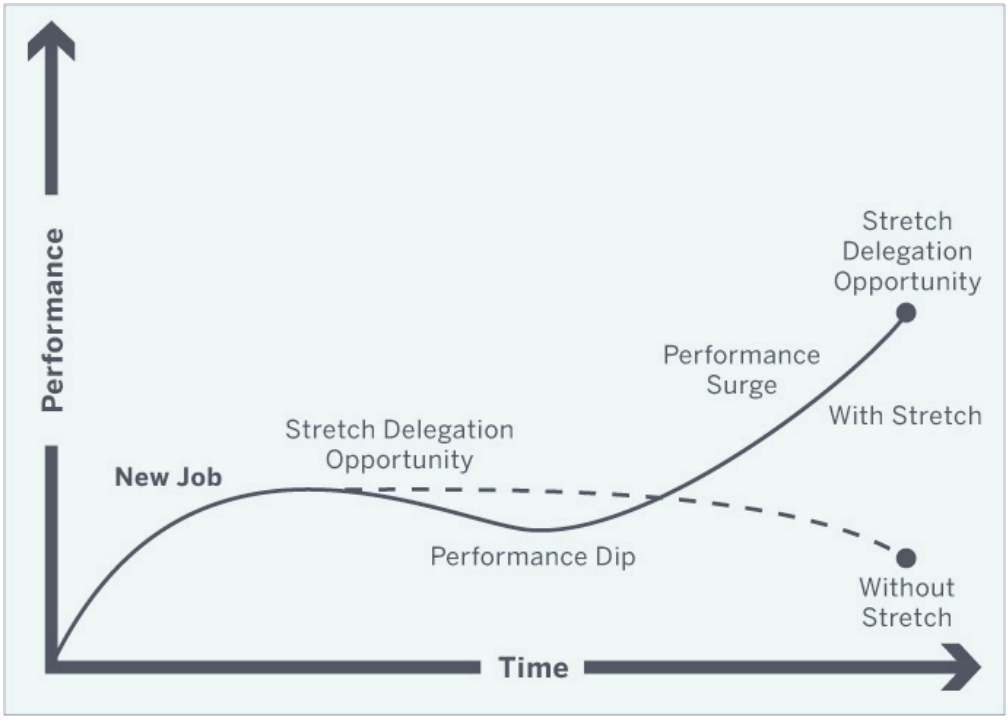
Questions 8-10 deal with Capability. How well do leaders’ efforts improve the organization’s capacity to execute, so that people see their goals as challenging, but realistic?

If your scores are low in one particular area, it means you have an opportunity to build trust more consistently by focusing on improving that element.

Developing Employee Capability

Use Stretch Delegation to create trust

Let’s look at one way to remedy a low Trust Ten Test score in “Capability.”



According to the most recent trust research from Interaction Associates respondents said the number one method by which leaders can build trust is: “Set employees up for success by providing tools, resources and learning opportunities.” Leaders who want to get more effective at building trust in this way will find that stretch delegation fits the bill.

A stretch delegation assignment is one where the employee is being asked to perform in new or unfamiliar territory. It is, by definition, a learning opportunity. The decision may also require the manager to move into uncharted ground (a different kind of learning opportunity). But the enduring benefits of stretch delegation almost always outweigh any temporary downside consequences.

Delegating responsibility is the act of authorizing another person (or persons) to act on your behalf and/or to complete an assignment that will fulfill an organizational obligation or promise. Successfully executed, this managerial action broadens employee accountability and increases the likelihood of success, while giving the employee access to new information and a learning occasion. Effective leaders use delegation build employee capability and commitment for the long term, and to get more work done in the short term.

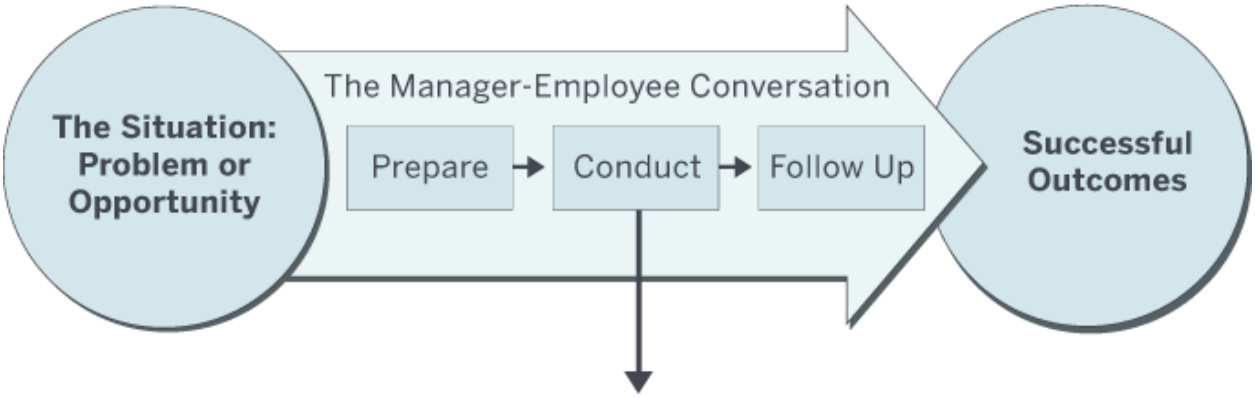
Planning for a stretch delegation conversation will help set up you and your candidate for success, while building trust. A thoughtful game plan for the conversation includes the topics you'll cover (content) as well as the desired outcomes and flow of topics (process).

Sample Desired Outcomes

By the end of this delegation conversation, we will have:
1. A common understanding of . . .
    - Assignment and due dates.

- Expected outcomes - i.e., what success will look like.
- Milestones, parameters and resources.

2. Agreement to proceed.
3. A set of next steps.



SET UP	ENGAGE	COMPLETE
• Desired Outcomes The expected results of the conversation or meeting • Topics and Flow The list of things to talk about and the order in which you'll approach them • Big Picture An explanation of how the topic of the conversation fits into the overall organizational context	• The Task and Goal What you'd like the employee to accomplish and why • Rationale for Employee's Selection Reasons you chose the employee for this assignment • Expectations and Parameters Guidelines for how the employee should go about the job • Resources The kind of support the employee will receive to do the job • Communication How you'll track progress and stay in touch along the way	Summary of Agreements A list of key agreements, preferably written • Immediate Next Steps A list of what the employee and/or the manager will do in the immediate future • Meeting Plus/Delta List of what worked and could be improved about the conversation

When to delegate

Let's look at the question of when to delegate. Not all tasks or projects are good candidates to hand over to someone else. Ask yourself these questions:

• Are you spending more of your time "doing the work" than prioritizing, planning or managing the work effort?

• Is there someone in your work group could do a better job than you? Can someone else be given the necessary information or expertise to complete the task?

• Does the task provide an opportunity to grow, "stretch" and develop another person's skills? This is key to helping create trust.

• Do you have enough time to delegate the job effectively? You'll need the time for adequate training, for questions and answers, for opportunities to check progress, and for rework if necessary.

• Is this a task that I should delegate? Obviously, there are some tasks you should not delegate. Some critical tasks for long-term success (for example, recruiting the right people for your team) may genuinely need your attention. Don't delegate if you've let the work go until the last minute, and deadlines are looming. You need enough time to set up your employee for success. Don't delegate if it's clear that the person you have in mind lacks the capability and motivation needed for the task. Finally, it's not a good idea to just dump every unpleasant task you face on your people; that can be de-motivating.

Delegation Pays Off
Delegation can be a true win-win. At first glance, it might seem like more hassle than it's worth. However, by delegating effectively, you can expand the amount of work that you effectively deliver. Delegate appropriate "stretch" assignments, and your employees will get better at tackling and completing challenging tasks. Effective leaders use delegation build employee capability, trust, and commitment for the long term, and to get more work done in the short term.

Building Trust with Transparent Decision Making

Help decisions "stick" and create buy-in as well as trust

Research has shown not only that employees value transparency from leaders about decision making, but that this kind of leadership transparency is a core basis for trust. In order to help managers and leaders meet the expectations of their employees in the area of transparency, let's first look at a couple of very common problems with decision making inside the group, and propose what to do about them.

Clarifying the Decision
Leaders should stop and take stock when the boundary of the decision is unclear. In these cases, you may notice each team member is seeking agreement on a different decision. You can recognize this is going on when:

The group appears to be deciding six things at once.

There is lots of wheel-spinning, and people are talking about the same issue in different ways.

People are in agreement about the overall issue, but fighting about details.

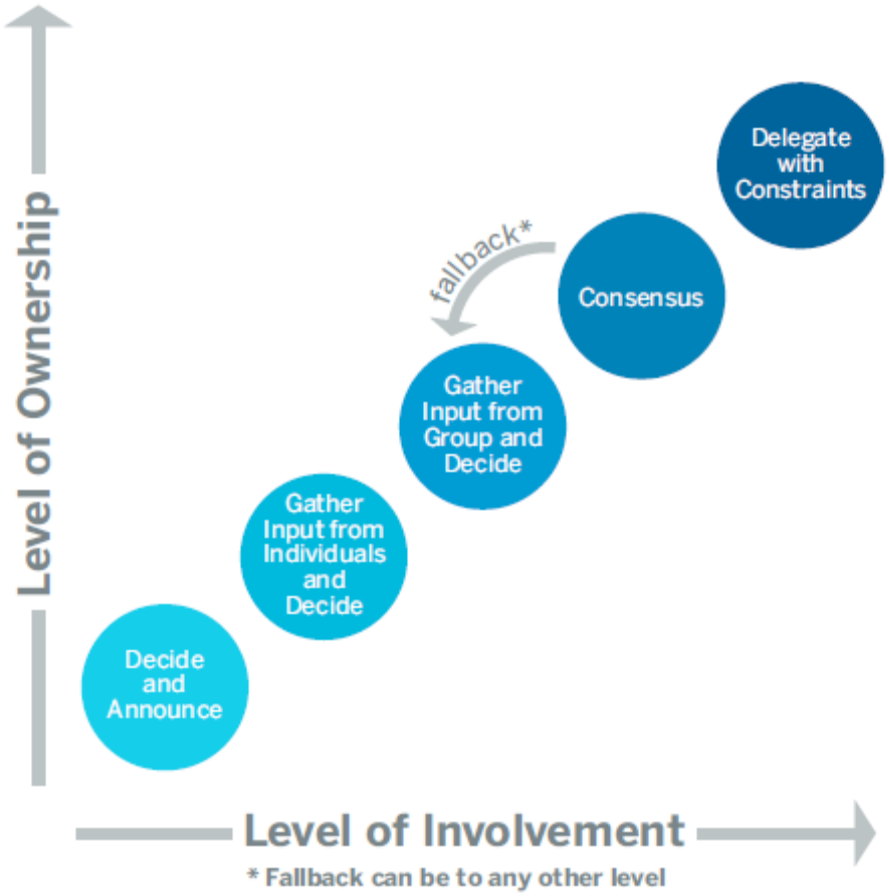
The solution is for the leader—or, indeed, anyone— to ask the clarifying question: "What is it we're trying to decide?" In the case of the purchase of a product, is the decision to purchase it, explore its feasibility, or make a recommendation to senior management? Come up with a clear statement of what you are deciding, and carry on from there. If there are several steps to the decision, break it down into its smaller agreements before proceeding. This allows a very clear and transparent process to move forward, and minimizes the chances of trust-destroying confusion.

Explaining the Decision Making Process

If the decision-making process isn't clear, trust can be compromised. The leader may believe she is getting input, and making the decision based on that input. But the members of the group may mistake providing recommendations for being empowered to make the decision. This sets up false expectations, and breaks down trust. When the leader makes a decision that is contrary to the input, the team doesn't understand what happened.

A clumsy involvement process reduces buy-in and trust. The antidote to this problem is to use a framework that we call the Levels of Involvement™.

Using the Levels of Involvement helps you reflect on a variety of factors that influence the decision, so that you can choose to involve the appropriate people at the right level of input and influence.



Its power comes from thinking through HOW it should be made, and WHO should be involved, before making the decision. You can increase ownership, empower employees, gain their trust, and get a high Return on Involvement when you use this model. It will also help you avoid consensus paralysis.

The key here is to share with the group which Involvement Level you will be using. Ask the group members for questions for clarification. When people know how the decision will be made, and how they will be involved, trust can be preserved.

One of the most important things a leader can do is be transparent and explicit about how much or how little involvement she is seeking, so that expectations are realistic and confusion is minimized.

Breakdown Dead Ahead
Now what about the decisions that break down outside the group, in the larger organization? Many business decisions are made by—or influenced by—a team, where people are representing the interests of constituencies inside or outside the organization. But these team members may not have the expertise or be fully equipped to

represent these other groups' stakes. They may decide to implement something that isn't feasible because of technical, legal, financial, or other barriers.

Sometimes people rush into a decision for expediency's sake, but the decision can't pass the reality test. If the leader or team members had checked in with the handful of people who hold the needed expertise, they would have been able to represent these vital points of view and decide on a reasonable solution.

The challenge is that organizations are trying to build structures and processes that support faster decision making. Over-reliance on consensus slows things down—not to mention that it can drive everyone crazy! But common decision-making structures built for speed don't always accommodate badly-needed input, so a decision is made without that key input.

The group must know the options, define the problem, and agree on a certain few milestone points where it will check in with key stakeholders. These points should be built into an involvement map, so everyone knows when they'll occur, who will be involved, and how the input will be used. These key input points should be predictable to everyone involved.

These simple, actionable methods are not a cure for every bad decision. But together, they form a powerful way to move forward with confidence, preserving mutual trust along the way. They definitely increase the odds of making wise choices, knowing when agreements are made, and keeping decisions sticky, not squishy.

RESOURCES

For more information on Trust Research over five years, and to download any of three free Trust Toolkits, visit www.interactionassociates.com/research.

About Interaction Associates

Interaction Associates (IA) is a 44-year-old innovator that equips people to work better together in order to realize superior business results. The firm helps global organizations build high-involvement, collaborative cultures by developing their leaders, teams, and change agents. IA offers customized consulting, learning and development, and coaching services. It was named one of Training Industry's Top 20 Leadership Training Companies in 2012, 2013, and 2014, and was listed in its Content Development Watch List in 2012 and 2013.