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Trust Building

One Saturday morning, when I was a teenager, a group of friends and I went to Goofy Falls, a beautiful body of water in the interior of Panama. It was during the rainy season, but on this day there was no sign of rain. In fact, the forecast was great! After a morning and afternoon of swimming, I grew tired and decided to take one more jump off the top of the falls. I took my jump and then sat on the rocks below to watch everyone. Suddenly I heard a loud roar. I looked up and saw people at the top of the falls running. Someone yelled, "Get out of the water!" Just as I started to get up, I looked up and saw a wall of water coming over the top of the falls at breakneck speed. I wasn't fast enough. I was swept away in something we had often heard about but never experienced—a dreaded mountain flash flood. The water took me miles down the river, over rocks, under trees—you name it, I think I went over it. For some reason, the water threw me up on a fallen tree. I was able to grab hold. I pulled myself out of the floodwaters and sat shaking and scared to death.

After what seemed like an eternity I heard a voice. I looked up, and standing in the jungle was a young GI with his hand out, beckoning for me to come with him. I had no idea who he was, but something about his face, his eyes, and his voice told me it was okay. It took quite a while to make our way back. Even then we had to be rescued. We were on the wrong side of the falls. The rescue team secured a rope across the rushing water and told me to hang on so they could help me across. I would not budge. Not me! The water was too swift. I felt a hand on my shoulder

and heard a voice say, "I'll tie you on my back and carry you across the rope myself." It was the young GI. I immediately stopped crying and did as he said. The onlookers cheered as we safely reached the other side. Why, when I was almost in shock, did I follow someone I didn't know?

I was too young at the time to understand, but as I reflect back on the young man, I now realize that he radiated confidence when he spoke.

His body and his message were congruent. He had to have had integrity to jump into a flash flood to save someone he didn't know, and he was certainly reliable. These are some of the characteristics of trust.

That's what this chapter is all about. I purposely placed it first in the book because of its importance to the success of the team. Without trust, the team will stay in the storming stage—characterized by difficulties, conflicts, unhealthy confrontation, and so on. Without trust, the team will not move to the performing stage, which is essential in order for the team to do its job.

In Dr. Edwards Deming's Fourteen Points of Management he talks about breaking down barriers between departments. He suggests putting everybody to work to accomplish the transformation of an organization. Teaming is one of the vehicles he suggests to put everyone to work. He talks about the fact that everyone has something to contribute. Without trust, team members will not work together; the team will eventually wither and die.

I recommend that teams begin every meeting with a trust-building activity. When teams are first forming, they need to devote 15 minutes of the first 10 meetings to trust building. As they move to the norming stage (characterized by an attempt to achieve harmony, friendliness, a sense of team cohesion, and establishing team ground rules) and the performing stage (characterized by constructive self-change, close attachment to the team, and high productivity), they can cut the trust-building time down to 5 to 10 minutes per meeting.

SIMPLE THINGS TO DO: TRUST ME, THE CHECK IS IN THE MAIL

It is better to suffer wrong than to do it, and happier to be sometimes cheated than not to trust.

—Dr. Samuel Johnson

Background

I find that people are full of uninformed optimism when they first work together. They want to skip the trust-building section and get on to the task at hand. To do so is a big mistake. While designing a program for a middle school, I asked the principal how much work the staff needed to do to build trust. He assured me that the members of his staff cared for each other, worked well together, and were ready for the high-level teaming skills. “Skip the touchy-feely stuff!” he said. I did, and I must tell you it was the worst training day of my life. They “niced” each other to death over the roles, they reluctantly shared ideas, and they wouldn’t share ideas with other teams. Some didn’t talk at all, some actually admitted to me they did not like their team, and two or three kept saying in a small voice, “We’re new here . . . what’s going on?” I went back to my hotel room and did what Madeline Hunter calls “monitoring and adjusting.” What these teachers needed was the first level of trust building. They needed to start out with simple, nonthreatening activities.

Did You Know

- People use communication barriers such as criticism, name-calling, threatening, and moralizing over 90 percent of the time when dealing with a problem or a need to be fulfilled.
- The most common cause of team failure is the inability of team members to get along; that is, there’s no trust.
- People often think trust is automatically built into their team because they are committed and have good will.

#1. Trust Talk

Ask each team member to think of a person he or she really trusts.

It can be someone in his or her personal or professional life. Allow one minute for each team member to think. Then ask them to share with the group three characteristics the person has that makes him or her trustworthy. Go around the group and ask each person to share his or her characteristics as the recorder writes them on a chart. Then lead the group in a discussion about how the team might use these characteristics to develop trust. As the team makes suggestions, the recorder lists them on another piece of chart paper. Tape the list on the wall so the team can refer to the ideas every now and then to see how they are doing.

Materials You Will Need

- 2 pieces of chart paper
- masking tape
- colored markers

#2. You're On

Tell the group that you will ask each team member to talk about himself or herself for three minutes. They may talk about family, profession, hobbies, or anything else that will help the team know them better. Give them a minute to think of what they are going to say. When the minute is up, ask everyone to get a piece of paper and a pencil. As each team member shares, any member who has a question jots it down so he or she can ask the person after all the team members have shared. Ask someone to begin. After three minutes, call time and move on to the next person. When everyone has had a turn, open up the floor and allow anyone to ask questions or

discuss information they found interesting. When everyone has asked all their questions, ask how this activity has helped team members get to know each other better.

Materials You Will Need

a piece of paper and a pencil for each team member

#3. Feeling Groovy

Ask each team member to list on a piece of paper three things that could happen so that at the end of the team meetings he or she could walk away and say, "Wow, I enjoyed working with my team today. It was great!" Examples might be humor, support for ideas, and being treated with respect. Allow one or two minutes for the team to write, then call on one team member at a time. Ask each member to share his or her thoughts and clarify when needed. The recorder writes the responses on a chart. Tape the chart on the wall and refer to it from time to time to check on how the needs of the group are being met.

Materials You Will Need

a piece of paper and a pencil for each team member

1–2 pieces of chart paper

masking tape

a colored marker

#4. T-Shirt Art

Tell the team members they are going to spend some time talking about themselves. Suggestions for sharing are books they like, favorite TV programs, what they like best about their jobs, what motivates them to work, and what characteristics they

have that will make them a valuable team member. Then give the team a large sheet of chart paper and colored magic markers. Have them cut a large T-shirt out of the chart paper. Then ask them to design a logo with a slogan on it that represents their team. For example, if they see themselves as caring, they could adopt the bear as their logo and use the slogan "Because We Care!" Another team may see themselves as caring and have five sombreros as their symbol with the slogan "Five Amigos Working Toward Transformation."

Materials You Will Need

chart paper

colored markers

scissors

#5. Business Cards

This activity is a great one to do after the team has met a couple of times and knows each other better. Tell team members that they have spent a great deal of time getting to know and understand each other. Tell them that as a team they are going to design a business card that represents them and what they stand for. They will have it printed and share it with other staff. For example, a team with a Care Bear logo might design a business card with bear paws on it. The card might contain the members' names and a sentence that reads, "Call 1-800-WE-CARE if you need help and support." Each team puts its cards into a large fishbowl. From time to time the administrator pulls a card and does something special for that team.

Materials You Will Need

a piece of poster board or chart paper

assorted colored markers

printed business cards

#6. The Name Game

Ask the team members to come up with three self-descriptive words that start with the first letter of their first name. For example, Carol might use the words *caring*, *comical*, and *committed* to describe herself to her team. The recorder writes the descriptors on a chart. Lead the team in a discussion about how these characteristics of team members will make them a powerful team.

Materials You Will Need

- a piece of chart paper
- a colored marker

THINGS THAT TAKE EFFORT: YOU CAN DEPEND ON ME

I wish I had some way to make a bridge from man to man.
... Man is all we've got.

—Cross Daman in Richard Wright's *Outsider*

Background

Not long ago I was in New York just beginning a workshop. I had my attention grabber ready. Just as I was about to begin, a young man in the workshop walked up and said, "Hi, you and I have a mutual friend." I smiled at him and asked who it was. He then told me something I had told our mutual friend in confidence. When he finished, he said, "She told me you wouldn't mind her sharing with me because you were a very open person." I was so stunned and offended. All morning I was very uncomfortable. I ended up having dinner with the young man and lunch the next day. It wasn't until the last day of the workshop that I began to feel comfortable with him.

We spent some time getting to know each other, during which we established a friendship. We progressed to a new level of trust, but I must admit it took some effort. Trust among colleagues is very much like that. Trust builds gradually, incrementally, and with effort. As the team matures, the level of trust increases. The members no longer feel a need to hide their feelings. They begin to level with each other and let their guard down. Members believe they can reveal aspects of themselves and their work without fear of being judged by team members.

Did You Know

- Trust influences all aspects of human interaction.
- Trust will develop over time if the team is moving in positive directions. Trust will increase or decrease, depending on how the members react to each other.
- As trust builds, members are open to learning from each other.
- Team members who laugh and take risks together build trust at a faster rate and on a higher level than if they do not.

#7. Secrets

Ask the members to divulge something they have never told about themselves. An example might be something that happened their first year on the job or a negative opinion they formed about someone that turned out to be wrong. When everyone has had a turn, tell the team not to be misled into thinking this is an easy activity. It takes quite a bit of trust to reveal mistakes.

Materials You Will Need

none

#8. Sharing Time

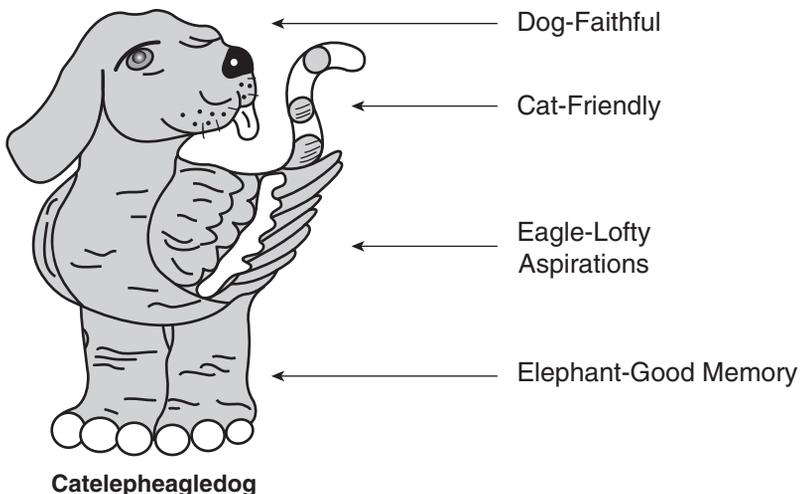
Ask team members to bring a special artifact to the team meeting. It should be something that is really meaningful to them. For example, one member might bring a picture of his or her grandparents. Another member might bring a baby shoe. They are to explain what it means to them and why it is important. Explain to the team that these things help them get to know each other better. Tell the team that trust is built through sharing parts of ourselves with others.

Materials You Will Need

artifacts from each person

#9. Trust Creature

Ask the team to share the reasons they trust each other. On a chart, list attributes of their team that indicate trust. Tell them that as a team they will create a creature that represents the attributes they listed. Have them hang the Trust Creature in their meeting room. If applicable, have them share their creatures with the other teams.



Materials You Will Need

a piece of chart paper
construction paper
assorted colored markers
scissors
glue
masking tape

#10. Human Trust Check

List and discuss the following trust factor descriptors on a chart:

We listen to each other.
We are sensitive to body language.
Our team climate brings out the best in all of us.
We are comfortable with disagreement.
All voices are given equal power.
We feel safe and validated in our interactions.
We are an interdependent team.

Construct a human trust graph on the wall by placing three signs spaced about five feet apart. The signs should read, from left to right, HIGH, MEDIUM, and LOW. Tell team members they will rate their perception of the trust level of the team by standing under the sign that best represents their feelings about the trust level in the group. If team members read the trust factors on the board and rate all of them a 4 or a 5, then they would stand under the HIGH. If they would rate the trust factors mostly 3's with one or two 4's, they would stand under MEDIUM. If they rate the trust factors all 1's and 2's, they would stand under LOW. Ask the resulting groupings to discuss among themselves why

they feel the way they do about the trust level of the team. Tell them that after they have a few minutes to discuss, a person they select will share their grouping's thoughts with the whole team. Call the entire team back together and ask each representative to share his or her group's thoughts. Keep in mind that a team that is just forming may score in the LOW range because the members do not know each other. The team brainstorms ways to help overcome any low and medium concerns. The recorder writes down the solutions, and the team members check themselves as to how they are doing at every team meeting until the trust level from each member is in the HIGH range.

Materials You Will Need

- 3 large cards labeled HIGH, MEDIUM, and LOW
- list of trust factors
- 3 pieces of chart paper
- 3 colored markers

FOR THE COMMITTED: PEOPLE WHO NEED PEOPLE ARE THE LUCKIEST PEOPLE

Everyone has a vast capacity for being more understanding, respectful, warm, genuine, open, direct, and concrete in his human relationships.

—George Gazda, educator

Background

I was a little nervous as I began the workshop at Townline Elementary School. I had worked with the group before and had planned some sophisticated activities. I gave the first set of directions and watched as the wild rumpus began. I was the observer and was to record their behaviors. Words cannot

express how these people worked together. I'm not sure I've ever seen a staff like this. They were so open, full of fun, honest, supportive, and I could use at least 10 other adjectives. If people made mistakes, it was no big deal and they would try something else. The great thing was that if I hadn't known who the principal was, I wouldn't have been able to pick him out of the group during this activity. He was one of them. What was it? What was making this staff appear to be different? It wasn't that they had mastered all the teaming skills. In fact, they had a hard time reaching consensus. It seemed as if they had no written norms of behavior for teamwork, and they all talked at once. They still had a lot of room for improvement. All of a sudden it dawned on me—they trusted each other. I mean absolutely and completely. They felt totally free to be who they really were. I have to say it was a joy to watch. My nervousness disappeared, and when they voted to adopt me, I came willingly into the Townline family.

Did You Know

- The leader of the team must always monitor the level of trust closely, for without trust the team will not continue to function effectively.
- Authenticity is the key element of trust.
- Trust develops from adequate or total information so that individuals can influence or make decisions and control their own work.

#11. Burst Write

Ask each team member to write a one-page paper on the importance of trust on a team. Their papers should talk about essential characteristics team members must exhibit, what would cause them not to trust, and so on. Tell them to use the Burst Write technique wherein they write for five minutes without stopping or editing. Give them one week to complete the paper. At the next team meeting, ask the members to share their thoughts. Label three pieces of chart paper as follows: Importance of Trust, Essential Characteristics, and Behaviors

That Cause Low Trust. Record what the members share. Lead the team in a discussion of things they can consciously and systematically do to encourage a high level of trust. Together, design a plan that includes activities that reinforce trust.

Materials You Will Need

- a piece of paper and a pencil for each team member
- 3 pieces of chart paper
- masking tape
- a colored marker

#12. Wonderful Me

Distribute the Wonderful Me handout. (See the example of a completed handout below.)

Tell the team members that as they think about the images they have of themselves, they are to work quickly and record

WONDERFUL ME		
List 5–6 words that describe you.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly • Full of energy • Many moods • Adds flavor 		
<p style="text-align: center;">What kind of animal best describes you? What musical instrument best describes you? What food best describes you?</p>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Animal</p> <p>HORSE</p> <p>Why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly • Full of energy </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Musical Instrument</p> <p>VIOLIN</p> <p>Why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many moods </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Food</p> <p>CILANTRO</p> <p>Why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds flavor to a dish </div>

their first thoughts. Once they finish, they go to the WHY section of each box and list reasons they are like the animal, the instrument, and the food they chose to describe themselves. In other words, if a member described herself as a horse, she should describe why she is like a horse.

Make a chart using the model below. Have the team members share what they have written on their worksheet. Write down what they say on the chart.

Discuss what each team member gained or achieved through this activity.

<i>Team Member</i>	<i>Animal</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Words</i>
Jeff	Horse	Violin	Cilantro	Friendly Full of energy Many moods Adds flavor

Discuss how this process reinforces a high level of trust.

Materials You Will Need

- a copy of the Wonderful Me handout for each team member
- a large chart for gathering responses
- colored markers
- masking tape