

Do your employees trust you?

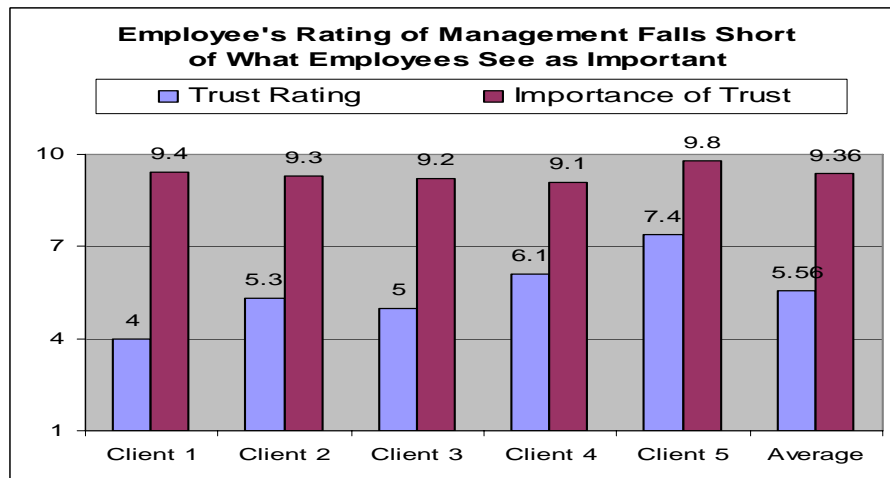
Management often underestimates the importance of trust and overestimates (or takes for granted) its level with employees. Research shows that high levels of trust will create high levels of performance. Low levels of trust creates waste, turnover, poor morale and lost opportunities. Long term performance in a company depends on a leader’s ability to get the most from his or her people. The only way that can happen is if they trust the leader. As any star athlete knows, the ability to keep your eye on the ball can make the difference between winning and losing. Similarly, successful business leaders know their ability to create and maintain trust is a skill for performance. Leaders who understand the 5 key rules that create and maintain trust will significantly outperform their nearest competitor.

According to the International Association of Business Communicators, you’ll know if you have mastered the basic skills of building trust when you see minimal employee turnover, employees communicating frequently without anger, employees are willing to accept change, conflict is productive not destructive, and when everyone is cooperating as a team with high productivity. The research shows a direct connection between higher levels of trust, organizational performance and job satisfaction.

One way to know if your employees trust you is to ask them. Wally Hauck of Supertraining, Inc. has been doing just that for nearly ten years. *“The results are consistent. There is a significant gap between how employees rate the level of trust and what they expect”* says Hauck. On a scale of 1 to 10 the average gap between what employees want and what they get is nearly four full points.¹

Furthermore, according to Watson & Wyatt, the human resource consulting company, *“Only 39 percent of employees at U.S. companies trust the senior leaders at their firms. Three-year total returns to shareholders are significantly higher at companies with high trust levels.”*²

Chart 1



¹ See chart 1 Source is Supertraining, Inc. Employee Survey Data – five (5) clients with a total of 500 employees –167 Cherry Street #404, Milford, CT 06460 – 203-874-8484 – www.supertraining.com

² Watson & Wyatt Attitude Survey WorkUSA® 2002

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According to Hauck, leaders can improve profit and results if they measure employee trust and discipline themselves and their management team to practice five basic rules:

1. Think differently about problems
2. Conduct yourself with impeccable respect
3. Conduct yourself with impeccable integrity
4. Replace criticism with feedback (data)
5. Improve processes and methods

1. Think differently about problems:

Stop blaming employees for mistakes. Employees don't make mistakes on purpose so stop thinking they could have avoided problems if "they just used common sense" or "paid attention to what they were doing." Instead, accept that at least 94-99% of all problems are caused by the processes people work within.

Dr. W. Edwards Deming said *"A basic principle here is that no one should be blamed or penalized for performance that he cannot govern. Violation of this principle will only lead to frustration and dissatisfaction with the job, and lower production."*³

Leaders must think first about the processes to find the root cause of mistakes, errors and problems and stop thinking people are to blame for mistakes.

2. Conduct yourself with impeccable respect:

Leaders optimize trust by modeling respectful behavior at all times even in the face of disrespect. Regardless of what employees do leaders can always treat them with respect. People are most upset when they believe they are treated disrespectfully, for example, disrespect is always a factor in workplace violence episodes. Showing respect builds credibility. When leaders behave disrespectfully they lose their influencing power.

A V.P. and General Manager of a client called me into his office to complain about another consultant's mistakes. In front of me and other employees, he berated that consultant using vulgar language. He was clearly disrespectful. I could understand his reasons for anger but I could not condone his behavior. In discussions afterward, the employees who witnessed the diatribe were concerned the V.P. might behave that way in the future toward them. Even though the focus was not on them they were concerned. The V.P. lost credibility, created fear and immeasurably damaged trust with me and the employees. He didn't need to do that. He could have been respectful and still made his points.

3. Conduct yourself with Impeccable Integrity:

Leaders manage expectations and influence the organizational environment by simply keeping their agreements. An agreement is a specific, measurable and time sensitive task that is predictable. For example, showing up and starting a meeting on-time is an example of keeping an agreement. Leaders who start meetings on-time demonstrate their integrity. Keeping little agreements like this creates an environment of accountability. When leaders model this behavior first they influence others to have that same trusting discipline. In addition, leaders must demonstrate respect when they can't keep agreements by letting the appropriate people know.

³ Dr. W. Edwards Deming, Out of the Crisis, page 251

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Bold organizational objectives (like increasing sales by 10% or improving profitability by 20%) are made up of a series of multiple and interdepartmental agreements.

Replace unsolicited criticism with data (feedback) -

Employees want to learn and don't like to be criticized. They don't need criticism to be productive. Criticism, or the fear of criticism, will damage trust. Instead, leaders need to provide feedback (data). Feedback is data. Data can only come from a clear process and it facilitates learning. Criticism is opinion or judgment. Employees want to learn, they don't want to be judged. When employees feel judged (as in a performance review) trust is damaged.

For example, if a sales person did not meet goals, to optimize trust, a sales manager must collect data to discover if that person is outside the acceptable limits as compared with all the sales people. Perhaps they are using a different presentation method. Perhaps they need additional training.

To optimize trust, a leader's job must be to facilitate and support employees, not criticize them. This means they need to collect data first and discuss the data and the flaws in the process not the flaws in the person.

Improve processes and methods -

Non-optimal processes and defective methods cause errors. People rarely if ever purposely make mistakes. A sales person in a hardware store sold me the wrong part for my sink. He didn't do it on purpose. He was not properly trained to have the knowledge necessary to do his job. The training process or the process he uses to access information to answer customer questions was flawed. 94 to 99% of the time the real root cause of problems will be found within a process not a person. To avoid the mistake in the future he has to know another method or a different process.

Every leader can improve trust in their organizations or departments by following these rules. These rules are simple to understand and a challenge to implement. The challenge is worth it because an increase in trust will improve performance.

Wally Hauck is a Team Building Consultant who helps leaders to bring out the best in people. Organizational problems often appear, on the surface, to be “people problems”, when in fact, the real problems are actually the organization’s underlying broken internal systems. Relationships, trust and loyalty are more important now than ever before because the real value of an organization lies in the minds of the employees and their ability to solve problems. Wally helps leaders bring out the best in people.

Wally is a Certified Speaking Professional or CSP. The Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation, established in 1980, is the speaking industry’s international measure of professional platform skill. CSP is conferred throughout the International Federation for Professional Speakers only on those who have earned it by meeting strict criteria.

Wally has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania; an MBA in Finance from Iona College; and earned his PhD in Organizational Leadership from Warren National University in 2008. His book **Blueprint for Success** provides ideas that can help leaders unlock their potential, remove metal blocks to success, and provide new insights to accelerate positive change. Wally’s chapter, *The Power of Influence: 7 Secrets for Successful Leadership*, provides leaders with insights to create an environment of trust, continuous learning, and employee loyalty. Wally has worked with dozens of firms and government agencies in the last decade.

In addition:

- President National Speaker’s Association Connecticut Chapter 2008-2009
- Past President of American Society for Training and Development, Fairfield County CT Chapter
- Past President of American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), Fairfield County CT Chapter
- Past Member of the Board of Directors of the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce
- Past Member of the Board of Directors for Bridgeport Rotary
- Past Board Member for Literacy Volunteers of America
- Speaker for The American Society of Quality at national conventions
- Speaker for The International W. EDWARDS DEMING INSTITUTE THE NINTH ANNUAL RESEARCH SEMINAR and Author for the Research Paper: “THE WHITE FLAG™: a Predictable Method to Build a Culture of Trust and Accountability.”
- Speaker for the W. Edwards Deming Institute Annual Conference

Please access the web site for further in formation: www.wallyhauck.com



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