

Rebuilding Trust In A Broken Organization

Can you recover employees when discouragement has reached a point of no return?

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“Great teams are built on the foundation of great leadership. And great leadership is built on the foundation of great trust.” - David Meyer 2002

Truly great organizations have a level of trust that permeates the entire organization. Top executives trust that when they make decisions, those decisions will be carried out at all levels of the organization. And, employees trust that the top level executives are making decisions that will not only maximize profit, but will also benefit the entire team, including the employees.

Sadly, few organizations today qualify as “truly great.”

Over the years, the level of trust in American business has gone from an unhealthy “I trust everything that management does” to an equally unhealthy, “I don’t trust anything that management does.” Through a combination of downsizing, rightsizing, re-engineering, asset allocation and dozens of other euphemisms, American businesses have managed to create a crisis where none existed. They have destroyed a healthy level of trust, where employees understood the business and tried to build it. That trust has been replaced by an unhealthy level of distrust that moves employees well beyond the issue of not caring about the organization, and into a position where many gleefully watch the organizations self-destruct. By treating employees as disposable units, employers have chased their best and most productive employees from their organizations and created their own version of the “energy crisis”.

In simple terms, an “energy crisis” exists in an organization when the employees are not engaged in the business, see no point in advancing the aims of the business, and will actively expend their energy in activities that advance their own self-interest over that of the company.

Can trust be rebuilt in an organization where all hope has been lost?

Yes it can. But it is not easy.

A good analogy for trust within an organization is the “emotional bank account” popularized by Steven Covey and his “7 Habits of Highly Effective People”. For organizations to rebuild trust they must begin making payments into their

employees' emotional bank accounts. These payments begin to shift the account balance from its current substantial deficit to a large positive balance.

The first step in rebuilding trust is an honest and true acknowledgement that trust has indeed been lost; and that the cause of that loss is not the employees, but the actions of the executive team themselves. Once that acknowledgement has been made, it is important to identify and eliminate any additional energy leaks within the organization.

Common sources of energy leaks include:

- Unclear or misaligned organizational goals
- Infighting among executives or management teams
- Executives who place their own personal gain over that of the organization and its employees
- Unclear or ineffective communications
- A mismatch between the information being communicated and the actions of the management team

After eliminating the additional energy leaks, management can then begin the slow process of building trust by carefully crafting a comprehensive “energy plan”. This plan is specifically designed to invest in the employees; which, in turn, encourages the employees reinvest themselves in the company.

An engaged and energized workforce leads to higher productivity, reduced costs, improved customer service, and increased profitability. Employee engagement happens when your Corporate Culture, Leadership Style, and Employee Expectations are in synch.

The Fusion Program from ECI Learning Systems is designed to align these 3 concepts in your organization – engaging your employees and creating positive energy that will propel your company to new heights.

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