



Collaborations

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“Our intentions are to provide in-depth information of value in response to questions we hear repeatedly from our clients...”

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A Warm Response

Dear friends, clients and colleagues,

We thank you for your response to our introductory issue of “Collaborations.” We enjoyed hearing from many of you and appreciated your positive comments.

Our intentions are to provide in-depth information of value in response to questions we hear repeatedly from our clients, and that you may have asked yourself. In addition, we desire to strengthen and maintain our relationships with you through this medium.

The fresh look and feel of “Collaborations” is thanks to Carol John, our Design Editor. Carol, who produces newsletters for two other groups, joined us to bring her newsletter design and editing expertise! In addition to her designing work, she is also a writer and speaker. We’re pleased to have her on our team.

Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to anyone who might find it interesting or useful. Likewise, if you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please let us know and we’ll be certain to remove your address.

The three of us, Marilyn, Dave and Susan, have been working in the areas of leadership, team and organizational development for the last twelve years. We also have in-depth experience in the areas of diversity training, career and life planning, group dynamics, mentoring and coaching, facilitation skills, time management, conflict resolution, and many experiential programs. Our work is usually tailored to our clients’ unique situations.

In addition to each of us having our own business, we have been friends and colleagues for many years - hence the title “Collaborations.”

It’s summertime, and it is one of life’s blessings to relax and enjoy the summer weather. So we hope you’ve been able to take advantage of some vacation time during this special time of the year.

In your service,

Marilyn Deming, Dave Carey & Susan Gerke



What’s the Deal with Trust?

Question...

There seems to be a general skepticism where I work. Everything is looked at a little cynically. Sometimes it exhibits itself as a very low-level sense of wariness, while at other times it is a very clear and prominent notion that I, or we, or all of us, had better have as our first priority looking

out for ourselves. I would describe it as a pervasive feeling of a lack of trust, never too far from the surface, at times seeming to permeate everything we do. This sense of mistrust seems to be operative among individuals, work groups and indeed our entire organization. What can I, or we, do to build trust?

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What's the Deal with Trust?

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Collaborations response...

For people to be open and honest so they can maximize the way they work and live together, they must feel they can trust the individuals they are working with. We'll discuss a definition of trust, the challenges of trust, broken trust, trust in organizations and what you can do about trust in your own relationships.

Defining Trust

Trust... the belief that those upon whom we depend will meet our expectations of them. The more we depend on others, the more important trust is in the relationship. Organizations today are expecting people to work more collaboratively, so it is no wonder that trust comes up as an issue. In fact, we estimate that a minimum of 90% of the organizations and groups with whom we work have "trust" issues - and not because there is too much trust!

The Challenges of Trust

The first challenge is our mindset.

Do you believe that people are trustworthy?

Do you believe that people want to be trusting?

If your answers to these questions are anything other than "Yes", you are not alone, but we ask you to think about it for a moment.

Upon what do you base your responses? We find people typically base their response on just a few incidents or individuals out of literally thousands of interactions with hundreds of people. Is it rational to base your perception of people as not trusting or trustworthy based on these few incidents? We think not.

Another basic question is, *Do you believe people generally are trying to do the best they can in situations?* Again we would suggest the answer to that question is "yes" the vast majority of the time.

Dave tells us that during his POW experience, the prisoners' basic assumption was that each person was doing the best he could in the circumstances. This total and deep trust was a key part of what held them together and helped them survive each day. You may say they took a "leap of faith," but in the situation it was a leap worth taking.

Thus our basic assumptions form the starting point for our disposition to trust or not trust in every instance. Where we start makes a world of difference.



"Trust is the lubrication that makes it possible for organizations to work."
-- Warren Bennis

A second challenge is that we do not all approach trust in the same way. Some people trust you until you break the trust, and others don't trust you until you "earn it." This difference can impact the relationship and lengthen the time to build trust.

We hear people say all the time, "He or she has to earn my trust." We would be willing to grant that there is much truth in that. However, the kicker is that in order for anyone to earn your trust you must be willing to trust them or how are they ever going to earn it? That approach becomes a vicious cycle with no way out. Who is going to make the first move?

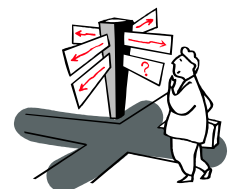
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Communication: A Model for Collaboration

My husband, Dave, and I (Susan) recently spent two weeks on vacation in Italy. We rented a car to see the Tuscany region and drove over 1,800 kilometers (1,200 miles) in 10 days! Dave drove and I navigated.

If you have ever driven in Italy, you may see where this story is going! Most of the road signs either come too soon or too late to react appropriately. And often, 20 or more directional signs will be posted in one place. Even a speed reader can't get through them all before the Italian drivers start honking!

On our second day driving, after a lovely day of sightseeing, we decided to head back to our hotel in San Gimignano. I told Dave how I thought we should go and sat back to enjoy the ride. When we reached the point where I expected we would turn right, Dave turned left. That way would EVENTUALLY get us back, so I said nothing assuming he had some plan in mind. After about 5 minutes Dave asked me, "Why are we going this way?" Hmmm...two possible responses: a) because you



Communication

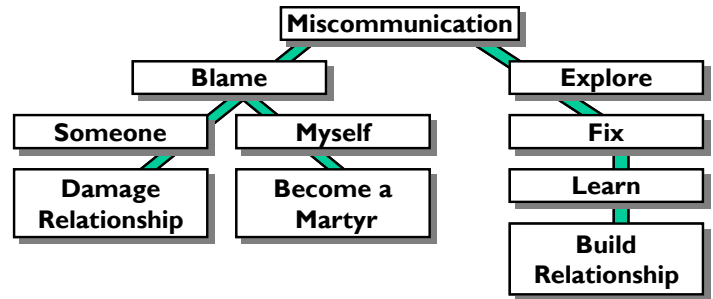
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ignored me and decided to go this way or b) because what I told you must have sounded different from what I meant. Fortunately, I was wise enough to choose “b.” We pulled over and discussed what we wanted to do to get back. We turned the car around and laughed together as we drove to the hotel.

That event set the tone for our driving the rest of the trip. We knew the driving was going to be challenging, so each time we got somewhere with no mistakes, we celebrated our success. It became Dave and Suz against the Italian road system!

So, why do I tell you this story? I think there is an excellent model for communications here that we can all use. When faced with a problem that stems from miscommunication, we have two choices a) blame someone, or b) explore the problem and solve it together. I believe our attitude is what guides us in making that decision. If I have a positive attitude about myself, the

other person and life in general, I’m much more likely to choose “b.” Here’s a model to help see this:



Dave and I learned together how to get around Italy and we had fun doing it. Driving in Italy is one of the fun stories we have to tell our friends and family. If we’d used the “Blame” approach, I’m certain getting in the car each day would have become stressful rather than the adventure we turned it into. And, I know we wouldn’t be telling our driving stories to friends and family!

What’s the Deal with Trust?

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So we challenge you to reexamine your basic mindset because your starting point and your mental frame of reference is critical in all interactions.

A third challenge with trust is that we are often expecting something different when we are looking for trust. Since the definition of trust deals with our expectations of each other, it is imperative that we have a great deal of clarity around those expectations.

There are also different levels of trust. I don't suddenly have deep trust in you. Rather trust is likely to build over time. Consider these three levels of trust:

- Level 1 - Trustworthiness: "I believe"
Building reliability, openness & integrity
- Level 2 - Consistency: "I trust"
Counting on one another.
- Level 3 - Faith: "Ultimate trust"
Going beyond the facts

If you are measuring our trust at Level 1 and I am measuring at Level

3, you are likely to have a more positive statement about the level of trust we share. So, we need to have a conversation about what trust means to each of us.

Broken Trust

It isn't always easy to understand how trust is built, yet we certainly know when it's missing or broken. And, while we each react in our own way to a betrayal, people seem to agree that rebuilding broken trust takes longer, if it is regained at all. The “betrayal of trust” is a huge error, a devastating mistake in both leadership and relationships. It is an error whose damage is incredibly difficult to repair. It is no wonder that a few incidents where trust is betrayed tend to have an impact which is completely out of proportion considering one’s total experience.

Organizational Trust

The climate of trust in organizations

comes largely from the leadership and, of course, to some extent, we all exercise a degree of leadership. In *Learning to Lead*, Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith describe four ingredients for trust:

- 1) **Constancy** — Whatever surprise leaders themselves face, they do not create any for the group. They maintain continuity and security.
- 2) **Congruity** — Leaders walk their talk. There is no gap between the theories they espouse and the ones they practice. Their morality is found in their behavior.
- 3) **Reliability** — Leaders are there when it counts. They are ready to support their coworkers in the moments that matter.
- 4) **Integrity** — Leaders honor their commitments and promises. They are ethical in their relationships.

What Can You Do?

Facilitators use several activities which are designed to reinforce and show examples of trust being very effective. You’ve probably been exposed to some of them. Some are simple

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Top 5 ranked Trust-building Behaviors

- 1) Communicates with me openly and honestly, without distorting any information
- 2) Shows confidence in my abilities by treating me as a skilled, competent associate.
- 3) Keeps promises and commitments.
- 4) Listens to and values what I say, even though he or she might not agree.
- 5) Cooperates with me and looks for ways we can help each other.

Top 5 ranked Trust-reducing Behaviors

- 1) Acts more concerned about his or her own welfare than anything else.
- 2) Sends mixed messages so that I never know where he or she stands.
- 3) Avoids taking responsibility for action ("passes the buck" or "drops the ball.")
- 4) Jumps to conclusions without checking the facts first.
- 5) Makes excuses or blames others when things don't work out ("finger-pointing.")

activities such as "trust walks" where one person is blind folded and led around by a partner, or "trust falls" where one person catches another as he falls backward. Other activities are more complex, but all are designed to clearly demonstrate trust in action and can provide an opportunity for a group to discuss their trust issues.

Probably the best way to work on trust is to challenge your own assumptions and beliefs about trust. To the extent that trust is an issue in your life or your organization, we suggest that if you will change your attitude and mindset to be more trusting, there will be a change in the constellation around you.

Where do *you* need to focus on trust?

Do you have relationships where trust is important?

Write the names of those people with whom you need, or want, to have strong trust (family members, employees, peers, your boss, etc.) Then, evaluate two things: 1) How much trust do they have in me -- high, medium or low? and 2) How much trust do I have in them?

Now, what will you do to either maintain or increase the trust with each individual?

Create your plan and start working it!

