

How to Build Trust, Not Bust It

Trust is the bedrock of every strong relationship.

Let that sink in...

Trust is at the core of all personal and professional relationships. With it, you can achieve great things with others. Without it, you'll go nowhere.

Do you remember a time when the trust was absent or broken? I do.

I once worked with a group of people. Notice that I wrote a *group of people*— we weren't a team. Our manager was a self-serving individual more worried about making a great impression with upper management. Again, notice that I wrote *manager*— the individual didn't have a lick of leadership in her bones.

Our group was filled with discord and gossip. We lacked priorities and direction. Our roles weren't clear. Our business partner didn't understand or value our business contribution. We were distracted by an underperforming co-worker who created a drag on the group's overall effectiveness. There was no recognition of our hard work, let alone a pat on the back for a job well done. Lastly, our business results didn't meet expectations.

Trust was nowhere to be found. We were going nowhere.

After several co-workers left or were exited, I found myself the only one that our manager could rely on to get things done. The burden became very heavy. Combined with the suffocating environment, over-work, and lack of appreciation, I started to burn out.

I was doing everything I could to be a positive influence, but I was met with resistance around every corner. I began to lose hope that things would get better. I remember feeling broken and desperate. I'd come to the end of my rope and was ready to leave the company.

Then, I remember praying and telling God about my circumstances. I got the sense that I should *hold on*. I wasn't sure what *hold on meant* or why. But at that moment, I resolved to take things day by day and not give up.

The next day was my birthday. When I arrived at work, my manager called me into her office and delivered the news. She told me that she was relocating to another city and that I'd have a new manager soon.

I can still recall the rush of relief that washed over me. *What a great birthday present!* I thought to myself—a new hope. Light at the end of the tunnel, and it wasn't an oncoming train. I was instantly optimistic about the future.

A few weeks later, I was appointed to a new team and leader.

Yes, a *team* and *leader* – a huge difference.

Immediately, my new manager, Ron, came to visit and conduct my annual review. My former manager completed the review document before she transferred, but Ron's responsibility was to facilitate the discussion. I was very apprehensive, thinking that Ron would let me go.

Ron held the review in his hand as we began our interaction. He told me that he disagreed with my former manager's assessment, and he acknowledged the hostile work environment in which I'd suffered. Despite the circumstances, he said I was still recognized as a top performer; he believed in me and wanted me to be part of his new team. Ron set down the review document and said that what my former manager wrote didn't matter now. Then, he asked me if I wanted a fresh start and

invited me to his new team kickoff in Atlanta. I eagerly nodded *yes and* thanked him for inviting me.

Upon my arrival at the kickoff, I recall sitting around a conference table, feeling excited and reserved at the same time. I'd heard that Ron was a great leader and could develop strong teams. My experience made me doubt strong leadership and teamwork were possible. I needed to see the proof in the pudding.

And the proof began...

Ron went first by sharing his family, values, experiences, and passion for the University of Tennessee. He asked for volunteers (pun intended) to share something about ourselves with the team. As folks opened up, I was amazed at everyone's vulnerability and the sense of personal connection. We laughed a bunch. It was a fun conversation, and I appreciated relating to the team.

Then, Ron transitioned to discuss his team vision. He handed out a paper that outlined the team's values, direction, destination, and expectations. As a team, we discussed and aligned to the proposed vision. Then, he encouraged us to focus on others, not ourselves, to serve rather than be served. He emphasized teamwork, prioritization, fun, and most of all, trust.

Yes, trust.

I hadn't been in a trusting environment for a while. It'd been dog-eat-dog for so long. But Ron's approach inspired me to follow him and become a team player.

During the next two years, the words on the page came to life. The time was some of the most enjoyable and memorable of my career. Our team collaborated, built strong partnerships, had a lot of fun, achieved great business results, and I grew by leaps and bounds.

For example, we hosted the NCAA Final Four, where I chauffeured Derek Whittenburg, a member of the 1983 North Carolina State Men's Basketball national championship team, to events, hung out with American Idol's Ryan Seacrest, and attended a Maroon 5 concert with the team. To top it off, our business performance results were so strong that we won a Disney World incentive for all of our families. Because of trust, we achieved more together than we could have apart.

At the end of my time on Ron's team, I sent him a note that said, "I didn't think it was possible to work for an inspiring leader and trust others as I do now. You've restored my ability to trust. Thank you for believing in me and giving me a fresh start." Ron's been a friend and mentor ever since.

I asked Ron the other day about his memory of the circumstances and his role. He told me, "My view of the situation was that it was the team and each person who did the heavy lifting and hard work to make things happen. I only helped facilitate and enable great people to do great work together." Again, this exemplifies his humility and leadership.

If you're ever faced with an opportunity to build or restore trust, I recommend you:

- **Be Real.** Let others know who you are, your values and what you stand for. Share your dreams, passions, desires, goals, experiences, successes, and failures. Go first and let go. Risk vulnerability with others, and they will reciprocate.
- **Establish Credibility.** Be who you say you are. Ensure that the audio matches the video – your actions match your words. Do what you say you'll do. Practice what you preach. Keep your commitments. Follow through. Earn respect by helping others solve problems, set direction, define roles and responsibilities, prioritize, make sound decisions, remove barriers and place the team's

agenda ahead of your own – put people first.

- **Enable Collaboration.** Create a trusting environment where people feel safe, failure and learnings are valued, opinions or ideas are openly shared, and folks must rely on one another. Help people reach their potential and, as a team, collaborate to achieve more than dreamed possible.

I've experienced what it's like to trust and not trust. I flourished under a strong leader who taught me the value of building trust with others and the powerful impact on all relationships.

How about you? Are you trustworthy? What would your team, your family, or friends say? Does your team trust one another? How do you know?

Remember, **trust is the bedrock of all relationships.** With it, you can achieve great things with others. Without it, you'll go nowhere.

If you are real with others, establish credibility, and enable collaboration, you'll become a trust-building leader.

Want to discover more about building trust and becoming a leader others will gladly follow? Visit my website, prestonpoore.com, today!

Cheers,

Preston