

Rock Solid Trust: How to Build it up (or Break it Down)

Trust: How To Build It Up (or Break It Down)

In making his case for the priority of TRUST in life and leadership, Stephen M. R. Covey in his book *The Speed of Trust*, comes out swinging for the fences:

- *There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization, nation, economy, and civilization throughout the world—one thing which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love. On the other hand, if developed and leveraged, that one thing has the potential to create unparalleled success and prosperity in every dimension of life. Yet, it is the least understood, most neglected, and most underestimated possibility of our time. That one thing is trust.*

Simply stated, in the marketplace of leadership, trust is the currency that undergirds—or undermines—the entire economy. Any defaulting or downgrading of this precious commodity will send the leadership indicators south in a heartbeat.

In short, when trust is low, the cost is high. Lower productivity. Compromised excellence. Hidden agendas. One-up-man-ship. Partial disclosure. Win-lose thinking. Missed opportunities. Minimal traction. What should be straight-forward and satisfying becomes complicated and tense.

Every leader knows the tough truth of trust: while it takes months to build it up, it only takes minutes to blow it up.

So what's the answer? As a leader, how do you build a bank account of trust with those in your circle of influence?

Of all the possible answers to that question, each pales in comparison to the ultimate answer: The fastest pathway to build trust is to be remarkably reliable. A trustworthy leader is a person who has earned that trust by being relentlessly predictable.

To make it personal, consider a few questions of self-inventory:

- Can you be counted on?
- Do you deliver on your promises?
- Are you the “one hit wonder” or the person who has a track record of consistency?

- Are you the person that always needs to be reminded?
- Are you proactive in notifying someone as soon as you know you can't meet a deadline?

By the way, I would recommend that you take the Trust Equation Quiz. It will help objectify both your 'biggest strength' and your 'biggest opportunity for improvement' when it comes to trust. And if you really want to be intentional about stepping up your trustworthiness, I recommend that you ask one of your closest colleagues to take the quiz on your behalf and then discuss the outcomes.

I leave you with the same question I ask myself: since trust is fundamental to the success of your relationships and organization, what are you presently doing to earn the reputation of being a leader who is remarkably reliable?