From Trust Busters to Builders: The Faith Factor

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Trust Enables Teams to Elevate Performance & Results!

Summary*: One need not live long to experience the hurt, confusion, anger, and betrayal of broken trust. How can one regain trust and change the behaviors that lead to broken trust, broken relationships, broken organizations, and broken hearts? This article explores typical trust-buster qualities and actions and ways in which one can restore trust, mend relationships, and heal emotional hurts. Extreme or challenging trust-buster leaders as opposed to the ultimate trust builder, the servant leader, is discussed. Christian leaders have a powerful assist in their approach to trust building – the Holy Spirit. The impact of the faith factor is discussed with the recognition that true transformation starts in the heart. What controls your heart motivations? Is your motivation pride or humility, self or others, superiority or servanthood? Take the initiative to be a trust builder and support leaders who are trust busters so they too can change, develop, and contribute to a culture of cohesiveness, respect, excellence, collaboration, and trust.*

Introduction

Ever feel betrayed at home, work, or in other organizational settings? Of course, one need not live long to experience the hurt, confusion, anger, and betrayal of broken trust. How can one regain trust and change the behaviors that lead to broken trust, broken relationships, broken organizations, and broken hearts?

> True transformation starts in the heart. What controls your heart motivations? Is your motivation pride or humility, self or others, superiority or servanthood? Leaders who are receptive to coaching/counseling have hope for restoring trust, building mutually positive relationships, transforming organizations, and healing their own heart and the hearts of those whom their trust-busting behaviors hurt.

Let us face it, people are imperfect and self-focused. Even those we love can disappoint us and betray our trust. When it happens, we cannot always walk away or if we do the consequences can be more difficult than rebuilding trust. Perhaps you have been the source of broken trust. You feel bad, want to make amends, and want to retore the broken relationship. Or you want to help someone who lacks awareness of how they undermine trust. They lack training in how to effectively build and maintain relationships. Or they may have grown up in circumstances in which trust relationships became manipulative and controlling so they use similar means to their own ends without realizing the unintended consequences.

This article explores typical trust-buster qualities and actions and ways in which one can restore trust, mend relationships, and heal emotional hurts. Extreme or challenging trust-buster leaders as opposed to the ultimate trust builder, the servant leader, is discussed.

Trust Buster Qualities & Actions

Trust is the belief in the abilities, integrity, and character of another person. One feels safe in relationship with someone who exhibits those qualities. Their actions are in the best interests of others as well as themselves. They communicate transparently and collaboratively to ensure the success of others. They are self-aware and aware of others, showing empathy, vulnerability, and authenticity. Their actions seek to be mutually beneficial. They are dependable, follow through on commitments, demonstrate integrity, do what they say they will do, and seek to be fair.

The opposite of these trust qualities and actions are trust busters:

- Lack of integrity
- Compromising character traits such as lying and undermining others for self-gain
- Withholding or misrepresenting information
- Lacking transparency in communications so one is unsure of the meaning
- Collaboration with an emphasis on getting one's own way
- Lacking empathy or using empathy to manipulate or control others
- Appearing superior and without fault
- Acting in a way that benefits oneself over others

- Unreliable, seeking advantage
- When doing what one says may be counter to their goals, trust busters may deny and cast blame on others
- Belying an image of integrity and pure motives, trust busters find a way to manipulate perceptions to achieve their objectives

Restoring Trust

If you recognize any of the trust busters in you or others, what can you do to change? First, one must want to change! Once you make that commitment, find a mentor or someone you trust to help you improve in the areas you lack skill or awareness. Feedback is vital, and a concerted ongoing effort to develop empathy, self-awareness, relational skills, and character qualities and values that enable lasting and mutually successful relationships is vital. When you fail, apologize quickly, and seek to rebuild the relationship with patience, perseverance, and practice. The following are essential steps to rebuilding trust.

1) **Admission:** When trust is broken, the first step is to admit the failure of trust. Without transparency in what happened and why, this step will block any further reconciliation.

If the trust is at a leadership level in an organization, the communications are much more complex than one-on-one. For example, in an organization in which layoffs occurred, employees or members of the organization feel betrayed, and that organizational trust was broken. Even when everything related to the layoff was managed well, those impacted can be affected emotionally and concerned about the future of the organization. If the layoff was at the leadership level, these concerns intensify. If the layoff was managed unprofessionally or perceived by the organization as improper or unfair, then the trust dynamics become increasingly complex. Showing care for those who transitioned as well as remaining employees/members requires respect for opinions, emotions, and relationships.

2) **Communication:** After the admission of a failure in a relationship, communication must be frequent, consistent, and empathetic.

In the case of layoffs, leaders should meet with employees/members to clarify what happened, how the people laid off were treated to ensure respect and fairness, and what the future organizational plans are to ensure future success. When appropriate, involving those remaining in planning is valuable for engagement and demonstrating leaders' trust in others' contributions. Dealing with others' concerns is paramount so communication must be honest, frequent, and transparent. If information is withheld, there will be suspicions and doubts about the leaders' integrity. If leadership attempts to restrict communication among employees/members both with those who transitioned and among those remaining, it will foster increased distrust of the leaders' intentions and competence.

3) **Follow up:** Rebuilding trust is not a one and done proposition. Exhibiting all the trust qualities and actions must be ongoing.

Using the layoff example, leaders cannot simply move forward on their own and expect everyone in the organization to just fall in line. Mutual respect for how others view the break in trust, openness to ways leaders can improve their own actions, skills, and results are paramount. While some employees/ members may align with leaders, others may have legitimate concerns that should be addressed openly and honestly. When there are leadership blind spots, it is particularly important to listen, be open to

change, and seek outside counsel when necessary to regain trust of the entire organization. Fostering genuine opportunities for positivity and unity provides support and focusing on mission and purpose demonstrates actionable and tangible trust.

Teams and Trust

The importance of trust in developing effective relationships, teams and organizations cannot be over emphasized. Patrick Lencioni's *Five Dysfunctions of Team*[1] is a classic in measuring and coaching/training leaders in how to build and function effectively as a team to optimize results. His research shows that the foundation of effective teams is trust. In the absence of trust, team members may fear being vulnerable to other members in admitting error or needing help. Lencioni's solution is to build a culture of trust in which members are open and honest, share problems, admit mistakes, and assist each other in a collaborative manner. Without trust other areas of team effectiveness in his model also will be compromised:

- Productive conflict is stifled by artificial harmony
- Decisiveness is limited by lack of clarity and buy-in
- Holding others accountable is neglected in avoidance of discomfort
- Collective success/results is undermined by pursuit of individual goals/ personal status

Teams with high trust can admit mistakes, acknowledge weaknesses, ask for help and input, acknowledge and embrace each other's skills and competencies, willingly apologize, are genuine and authentic with each other, and can share their personal lives with one another.

Extreme Trust Busters

There are certain people who have extreme behavioral preferences that make restoring trust particularly difficult for them and others. These are people or leaders who do not want to change or whose behavioral preferences make learning and acquiring trust qualities difficult. A leader who is successful may not see the need to change. Sometimes a confidential 180 or 360-assessment process in which other leaders and direct reports share their experiences with their leader opens their eyes to how others perceive them, and they are more amenable to change. Coupling 360 feedback with a comprehensive self-assessment like Harrison Assessments reveals underlying preferences to help leaders identify developmental traits and competencies which support trust relationships.

People often learn behaviors growing up that may become survival techniques. An example is the Dark Empath, one who has empathy skills, but has learned to use them for manipulation and control. These individuals may be even more difficult than a narcissist or a psychopath, in that one may think they are an ally. They harness empathy to anticipate your reactions, disarm your defenses, and subtly steer you toward their agenda. Working with such a leader can be emotionally draining and confusing. Their charm and charisma convince others that they are trustworthy. But they are deceptive in using relationships to achieve their goals and agenda, often use passive aggressive behaviors to gain the upper hand and lack consistency in character for their own gain.

The Dark Empath wears a mask that is very convincing as they can read others to exploit their emotions; highly intuitive leaders are particularly adept in rallying support for their agendas. When their goals and intentions are not aligned with the rest of leadership, they will use their skills to shape the leadership team to their advantage. Those who do not agree with their control-oriented leadership eventually are

pushed out or leave voluntarily. This challenging trust-buster leader is a wolf in sheep's clothing; they cannot be trusted, nor can they build lasting trust relationships with anyone who dares confront them. [2]

When authoritarian control becomes the norm in an organization, employees/members lose their freedom of behavior, thought, and emotion.[4] Such constraints undermine individuality, team-mindedness, collaboration, innovation, and cohesiveness. The culture becomes toxic as trust plummets and conflict, dysfunction, and turnover increases. Controlling behaviors which can erode organizational trust may include:

- Controlling Information including deception or distortion, withholding information, and discrediting dissenters.
- Discouraging access to or communication with former employees/members; manipulating information to confuse or deny.
- Controlling information at the leadership level; leaders decide who needs to know what and when.
- Withholding forgiveness and shunning those who dissent or leave; discredit dissenters; differentiate insiders vs outsiders creating a us/them mentality.
- Engaging in denial, rationalization, justification.
- Retreat of a leader creates a sense of isolation from others on the team/organization, promoting mistrust and miscommunication, devaluing others, manipulating emotions and sense of worth.
- Rejection of rational analysis, critical thinking, and constructive criticism.
- Suppression of criticism of the leader exerting control.
- Making others feel that problems are always their fault, never the leader's.
- Instilling fear of contributing to conflict or divisiveness when thinking independently and challenging others on a team.

How A Chameleon Elder May Lead

Pastor Rob was well respected by his congregation and community. An excellent preacher/teacher who loved to mentor other young men in their faith walk. On the elder board he was viewed as a strategic visionary who could help their ministries broaden their impact locally and through missions. However, Rob would at times resist elder input when their goals were incompatible with his own. When challenged in areas she preferred to control, he would reject ideas, retreat from collaboration, and even isolate team members who were independent thinkers. The conflict was behind the scenes and persisted over long periods.

Rob played the long game when it came to developing potential elders, selecting candidates he felt compatible with his agenda and leadership. Rob's duplicitous performance and inconsistent treatment of elders to achieve his own agenda was a risk to church unity and gospel ministry. Elders on the receiving end of his manipulation and dominance would leave the church. While Rob was undeterred with such departures, others in the church saw this loss of leadership as counter productive to building a culture of trust and mutual success.

Leaders may exhibit only some of these behaviors depending on the dynamics within the team, the effectiveness of other team members, and the goals of the leader who exhibits extreme trust-busting behavior. Also important to recognize is that a trust-busting leader may compartmentalize their relationships so that in some spheres of their work/lives, relationships are positive and effective, while

others may not be effective. For example, a leader may seek control in their work team and environment, but not in social or familial situations. Or they may be authoritative in their primary leadership of a team yet appear collaborative in other professional settings and organizations. Or they may lead upwards within an organization with exceptional relationships yet dominate their own team. These differences in leadership approach and relationships are usually very strategic to ensure their own success; like a chameleon they can adapt their relationships to optimize their own goals.

Master Trust Builders

The reverse of trust-busting leadership is servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf coined the servant as leader in 1970: **"**A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the 'top of the organizational pyramid,' servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible."

The best model of servant leader is Jesus who said in Matthew 20:16: *"The last will be first, and the first will be last, because many are called, but few are chosen."* And in Matthew 6:21 Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* By putting others first, by treasuring the value of the whole team or organization, a leader transforms his/her heart and in so doing changes how he/she interacts with others becoming a trust builder.

The Faith Factor

Christian leaders have a powerful assist in trust building – the Holy Spirit, who convicts of ungodly behaviors and guides one in Christ-like character and actions:

> *God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Romans 5:5*
>
> *And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:22*
>
> *We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience… Colossians 1: 9 – 11*

With these promises and many more throughout scripture, one may ask and receive wisdom in all relationships to build genuine trust.

In Paul Tripp's book, *Dangerous Calling*, he cautions pastors and elders who know scripture and preach the Word, that they are still imperfect and must not allow themselves to believe they have arrived spiritually. Whenever one begins to rely on their own knowledge, rather than humbly calling on the Holy Spirit and the community of fellow elders and believers to hold them accountable, they risk focusing on self rather than God and others. Tripp offers this closing admonition: "All of God's promises depend on His sovereignty. He can only deliver where He has complete control… The hope for your ministry is not the success of your pastoral control or ingenuity but that a sovereign Savior will complete His plan for His church."[4] This is sound advice for all Christian leaders and especially those in faith-based organizations.

Christians who are mature in their faith walk exhibit the fruit of the spirit: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."* Galatians 5:21-23 These behaviors permeate their relationships, strengthening their trust worthiness, empowering their actions, and transforming their own hearts and the hearts of those they serve. In Paul Tripp's book *LEAD: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church,* he reminds Christian leaders and pastors, "The model for the community that is the church, and most importantly its leadership, is the gospel of Jesus Christ." He quotes Paul in Ephesians 4:1-3 as the basis of his premise: "*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* Tripp admonishes Christian leaders and pastors to place the fruit of the spirit above position, power, achievement, acclaim, or success.[5]

The Heart of Transformation

Author of *Leading from the Heart*, Coach Mike Krzyzewski, one of the best coaches in the history of basketball and professor of leadership at Duke's Fuqua School of Business, shared the secret to his success and that of his teams and students: "It is as a humble servant that leaders create an environment in which relationships are paramount. An environment or culture that is transparent, cares, develops others, uses abilities collectively for the entire team/organization, and views every role as vital for accomplishing something bigger than each person ensures success individually and for the organization."[6]

Leaders who struggle to build trust or whom others find challenging to trust, can change with professional coaching/counseling support. A trust-busting leader must be willing to change from the inside out. True transformation starts in the heart. What controls your heart motivations? Is your motivation pride or humility, self or others, superiority or servanthood? Leaders who are receptive to coaching/counseling have hope for restoring trust, building mutually positive relationships, transforming organizations, and healing their own heart and the hearts of those whom their trust-busting behaviors hurt. Take the initiative to be a trust builder and support leaders who are trust busters willing to change so they too can develop and contribute to a culture of cohesiveness, respect, excellence, collaboration, and trust.

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