

Organisation Culture – A Key Link To Organisation Trust

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The moment there is suspicion about a person's motives, everything he does becomes tainted

- Mahatma Gandhi

So what is TRUST? Trust means confidence, certainty and expectation. When you trust people, you have confidence in them, in their integrity and their abilities.

When you distrust people, you are suspicious of them. You are suspicious of their agenda, their abilities, their integrity and their capabilities.

In today's global economy, TRUST is king. Trust is the social underpinning of social behaviour and social reality.

Society needs trust providing us with the certainty and confidence of the day-to-day interaction. Without trust our lives would lead to paralysis of inaction and possible chaos.

Low trust causes friction, whether it is caused by unethical behaviour or by ethical incompetence behaviour. Low trust is the greatest cost in life and in the organisation. Low trust creates hidden agendas, politics, conflicts, disagreements and defensive / offensive behaviour. Low trust slows everything, every decision, every communication and every relationship.

On the other hand, high trust produces stronger relationships, develops loyalty, enhances reputation and yields better results.

In business, trust is like the human blood system which feeds the necessary body with the oxygen it needs requires. In business these are often called collaboration, co-operation, empowerment, alliance, partnerships, exchange and commerce. These blood vessels sustain the day-to-day the quality of life relationships.

As such TRUST, impacts us 24 x 7 x 365.

Over the years, “**trust**” has become increasingly difficult to attain, starting with events such as the Enron, News Corp, Wells Fargo scandals and exacerbated by the Global Financial Crises. Not surprisingly, employee trust towards management is on the decline across the globe.

Now, whether you trust management, your colleagues and the organisation has a lot to do with how much they support you or rather the perception of it. When employees have a positive perceptions of organisation support, they believe their organisations will provide the assistance when needed for them to perform their job effectively and to deal with stressful situations.

It stands to reason then, employees who have strong perception of organisation support, feel an obligation to care about the organisation welfare and to help it achieve its objectives. Importantly, employees who have greater organisation perception support have higher job performance and are more satisfied with their jobs, more committed and more loyal to the organisation and less likely to be absent from work or even quit.

Now, what could undermine this perception of organisation support? Lack of trust. Major areas that could weaken trust are:

- **Ethics.** Ethics is the foundation to trust, but by itself is insufficient. You can't have trust without ethics, but you can have ethics without trust.
- **Stress.** Stress has become a serious concern for individuals and organisations. Today, the level of stress in the workplace is at an all-time high and these implications are alarming.

As a result, the current thinking is to setup set of controls and policies in the manner employees are “governed”.

Corporate controls and policies are critical foundational requirements of good Governance with the intent to express clear direction on the things which are fundamental, basic, important and therefore most enduring in running business.

But here is the problem, the more controls you place, the more organisational trust declines.

For example, organisation must adopt a ‘need to know’ access strategy, meaning users can only access the data they need to do their job.

That's all very well, but what perception does it portray? That it lacks trust in its people and what they can do? Anyway, an employee with determination and motivation will most likely find another way to access data, even though that they are no authorised to do so.

What can organisation do to develop a strong level of internal trust?

Provide Real Value Support

Some of the best ways to address the human risk factor in an organisation is by engendering real time investment in programs for people's education, training and support. An organisation with a strong sense perceived trust signals to the employee the organisation values and cares for them.

The criticality of these programs is important. They assess and analyse the real human performance within the organisation. By creating a plan for sustained improvements and introducing a series of real time education interventions and training, which targets behavioural changes will encourage a ‘risk aware’ culture.

This is critical as people make decisions every day that balance security against the imperative of making the business work.

Provide Real Value Job Satisfaction / Engagement

Involves the extent to which employees are excited by and absorbed in their work. And they typically evolve around several key factors:

- Mentally challenging work including opportunities
- Adequate compensation and recognition
- Career opportunities
- Friendly & helpful colleagues
- Working to a set of shared and common goals
- Flexibility in the workspace.

Demonstrate Respect

Respect is fundamental behaviour that demonstrates caring and concern. The overarching principle is the intrinsic worth of the individual. And this a direct relationship to trust and to the bottom line.

Leaders and manager must lead with example. When employees believe that their managers care and follow the same principles as everyone else, how willing are they to give their best? Be innovative? To collaborate? Very much so!

What is the value of developing high level of internal trust for organisations?

1. **Increased in Value** – Those with higher level of trust typically earn four times greater earning than the broader market and deliver more value to their customers.
2. **Growth Acceleration** – Those organisations with high trust not only outperform low-trust organisations but develop a vehicle whereby customers buy more, buy more frequently, refer more and stay longer with high-trusting organisations.
3. **Enhanced Innovations** – High trusting organisations tend to be more innovative in the products and service they offer, because they are more willing to share and take risks for the greater good.
4. **Improved Collaboration** – High trusting organisations foster greater collaboration and team environment which is key to success in the dynamic global economy.
5. **Stronger Partnering** – High trusting organisations engender stronger partnerships because they understand relationship.
6. **Better Execution** – High trusting organisation are able to execute their strategies quicker, better, faster and cheaper.
7. **Greater Loyalty** – High trusting organisation elicit far greater loyalty from their primary stake holders, customers, suppliers, distributors and investors.

In summarising

If you don't have enough incentives to address the importance in engendering and growing trust within the organisation, then you are paying a toll, a heavy and wasted "tax". While, these "taxes" may not show up conveniently on the income statement as "trust taxes", they are still there disguised as other problems.

I invite you then to put on your "trust hat" so that you can see what is happening below the surface. It only takes a single person to place your organisation at risk because of disengagement, office politics, bureaucracy and or other negative environment situations.

Having said that, there are massive positive dividends when organisation garner a high level trust.

"...If the work environment is ethical, productive and positive, people will stay – and stay committed. They'll drive your company forwards."

- Kent Murdoch, President and CEO O.C. Tanner Company

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