

The Trust Thing

So, congratulations are in order. You have just been offered at job at a different company and it is a pretty nice promotion for you. There will be more responsibility (which you wanted), a better managerial title (which you believe you deserve), and more money (which you wanted of course). You start the new job in two weeks and will get to meet your new team on the first day. All good stuff. Or so it would seem. There possibly are a few things you might want to consider before you go in that first team meeting.

One of the most important things to consider is the trust factor. You are the new person. They (your new team members) don't know you and you don't know them. You have been deemed worthy of the position by someone or some committee in the new company that made the recommendation that you get the position. But the very fact that somebody thinks you are worthy of being hired doesn't mean that when you step into the job, you will have the trust and commitment of the new team that you will need to be an effective manager. Equally, because you don't know them, you don't know how they work, you don't know how they will react to you; and because of those things, you probably don't know if you can trust them either. So what is going to happen is that both you and your new team, with some luck, will be putting the whole trust thing into a *tentatively acceptable* bucket until the interactions begin.

That first meeting will be the proverbial good-news-bad-news meeting. Whilst both you and your new team will be trying to put your best feet forward (the good news), the risk is pretty high that the level of trust will sink before it improves (the bad news). The reason for this is that team members will be watching and listening for anything that can give them real (or perceived) indications of what kind of manager you will be. The way our brains work; when we actively look for indications of real or perceived managerial traits, we will be screening what we see and hear by our own previous experiences with team managers. If you have had previous experiences or interactions with a boss that have been less than great, there is the high possibility that you will be watching and listening for similar indicators. You might think that if you don't slip up and say or do something stupid, you will be okay. But the way our brains work means that whilst you may be given a pass that day, but some team members may walk out of that meeting with the mental model that you will mess up over time

anyway so they will continue to reserve judgement.

Just as you come into a new job with baggage from previous jobs and experiences, your team members will have mental models about what a good manager or a bad manager are and what they need to look for in order to make that determination. Clearly, you need to help them see that you are worthy of their trust. Here are some things you do can to achieve their trust.

- Manage their expectations about what you are there to do and how you will do it. No doubt, the word has gotten out about the fact you are coming and where you came from. Most likely, it will also talk you up as if you were God's gift to management. Be open about the fact that this is just company marketing stuff and then tell them the reality you bring to the position. Trust is an earned commodity, and if they sense that you are all smoke and mirrors, you will not earn the trust you will need to deliver needed performance.
- Ask for their feedback on your demonstrated behaviours. Tell them that you know there are things you can do better and let them know what they are. Then let them know that if they don't see you demonstrating those managerial behaviours, they need to tell you because that means that, whilst you may think you are getting better, if no one on your team sees it, it doesn't count. And if they don't see that you are doing what you said you would do, your trust level will drop like a rock.
- Use team meetings as an opportunity to surface and talk about team and organisational undiscussables. Demonstrate to your team that you are truly all in this together and that you will fight to ensure that they have the resources and support they need to achieve the goals and targets they are given. If they don't sense that you are really part of the team, the undiscussables will become inhibitors of success and you will never win their trust.

Being worthy of team trust is the key to achieving the trust of your team. It is a pretty simple equation: No trust, no ability to achieve goals and targets; no ability to achieve goals and targets, then you were not the right person to be made the team manager. I think you can figure out the next part of the equation.

James B. Rieley advises senior leadership teams from all sectors of business and industry, higher education, and government, and has written extensively on the subject of improving organisational performance through leadership.

Wouldn't It Be Nice: Questions to Consider

1. Do you have the trust of the people you manage?
2. How do you know that?
3. Why do you think that is?
4. Do you trust your people to do what you need them to do?
5. What do you do to manage team expectations?
6. Do you receive feedback from your team?
7. How do you know that the feedback is open and honest and not slanted for fear of repercussions?
8. In the past year, what have you learnt and applied to demonstrate better managerial behaviours?
9. What else could you do?

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