

TRUST to Lead: How Leaders Make Vulnerability Worth the Risk  
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Welcome to Victory Leadership, where good leadership leads to victory.

Here we help emerging and established leaders win through clarity, confidence and growth.

Let's get started.

Welcome to the Leadership Pit Stop where we help emerging and established leaders win through clarity, confidence and growth.

My name is Earl Levy with Victory Leadership and today I want to talk about Trust.

Trust is easy to talk about until there is something valuable at stake because it's easy to say trust me.

However, it's harder to become the kind of leader people can trust with their questions, mistakes, mistakes, ideas, concerns, careers, and truth.

And that's because trust is not a shallow subject.

Trust reaches into the human condition and it asks the person to be vulnerable.

To trust is to place something meaningful within the reach of everyone else's decision, judgment, response, or care.

That can be reputation, confidence, belonging, or hope for growth.

That's why trust cannot be demanded by title.

A leader must be able to require attendance, assign the word, cut the line, enforce the standards, and approve schedules, to say the least.

However, a leader cannot force trust.

Trust is expended, and people usually expend trust on vulnerability when they feel that it is worth the risk.

That is why the heart of this episode in the Victory Leadership to Lead series is Trust to Lead how to Make Vulnerable Worth the Risk.

This is the climax of the Victory Leadership to Lead series.

Over the past several episodes, we've been building a practical leadership pathway.

Room to Lead helped leaders recover capacity.

Serve to lead help leaders to use that capacity to build up others and self.

Care to Lead helped leaders speak the truth with dignity and grow smart to lead help leaders turn potential into progress.

Now Trust to Lead asks a deeper question.

Can people risk vulnerability with the way we lead?

That question matters because trust is often the relational result of repeated leadership action.

People do not usually trust because the leader announces good intentions.

They trust because they experience patterns that make trust reasonable.

They see the care relationship repair the risks involved and the actions they consider trustworthy.

Trust is deeply human and in one way it is built through visible behaviors.

Two helpful ideas can help support this Perceived organizational support and Leader Member Exchange Perceived Organizational support or POSE helps us to think about the organizational climate.

Employees may often ask, even if they're asking silently to themselves, does this organization value me and my contribution?

Does this organization care about my well being beyond the job description?

Will I be supported when the work gets difficult and mistakes are likely?

Does the organization stand behind stated values when the going gets tough?

POSE can create a climate where trust can be it can become reasonable.

Leader Member Exchange or LMX helps us to think about the relationship between the leader and the person being led.

That relationship is personal.

It is shaped through repeated exchanges.

The employee learns, can I talk honestly with this leader even if the words don't come out right?

Can I count on this leader to follow up or follow through?

Does my leader treat me with the same fairness as everyone else?

Does this leader understand me and the relationship with my work?

Will my leaders support or even care about my growth?

Do my leaders only inspect me or will they invest in me?

And does my leader have my back?

LMX helps to create the relational pathways where trust becomes personal.

To put it simply, POS creates an organizational climate where trust can become reasonable.

LMX creates a leader follower relationship where trust becomes personal and both matter.

An organization's mission statement can say the right things, but if the direct leader is unreliable, trust may suffer.

A direct leader can care deeply, but if the organization repeatedly breaks promises, trust may still suffer.

Trust lives in the space between organizational climate and relational experience, and that's why leaders matter so much.

Don't confuse trust with blind faith in a person, process, or organization.

Trust is not ignoring patterns nor pretending harm did not happen.

Trust is not given unlimited access to someone who has repeatedly mishandled vulnerability.

And trust is not silence nor denial.

Healthy trust includes wisdom.

People assess risk, watch patterns, recall past experiences, and notice inconsistencies.

They will listen to the words, but they will believe the behaviors and the actions seen.

That is why leaders who want trust must ask a better question.

Not a variation of why don't they trust me?

But rather, what have they experienced that could make that trust feel risky?

That last question changes the leader's posture.

It moves the leader away from defensiveness and towards responsibility.

Trust 2 lead is a victory Leadership practice model designed to help leaders build trust from the beginning of the relationship and mend trust when it has been Damaged.

It has 5 parts T for tell the truth with care r repair the rupture U understand the risk s support through consistency and the final t take the next trustworthy action.

This is not intended to be a complete academic theory on trust.

That topic is far too broad for that.

Trust includes psychological, relational, cultural, organizational, ethical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions.

This model is intended more as a practical application.

It helps leaders ask, what can I do next to become more trustworthy?

So the trust begins with truth.

People need leaders who do not hide the reality, distort the facts, manipulate the meaning, or say what is convenient while avoiding what is necessary.

However, truth alone is not enough because truth can be delivered carelessly.

Truth can be weaponized.

Truth can be used to embarrass, control, or diminish.

And that's why care to lead came before trust to lead.

Candor tells people what they need to hear, and kindness helps them hear it with dignity.

Trustworthy leaders tell the truth with care.

They are honest without being hurtful, clear without being careless, indirect without being demeaning of one's sense of self worth, saying what needs to be said in a way that serves growth, clarity, and shared responsibility.

A leader who tells the truth with care might say, I want to be honest about what I am seeing and I want to do it in a way that supports your growth.

Or they may say, I want to name this clearly because the work matters is and because your contribution matters.

Another choice could sound like I don't want to leave you guessing.

Here's what I know, here's what I do not know yet, and here's what I will follow up on Trust grows when people feel the leader will be honest and humane.

R Repair the Rupture Every leader will have moments where trust is tested.

A missed promise.

A poorly handled conversation.

A leader may fail to follow through.

A person may feel dismissed, embarrassed, overlooked, or unsupported.

However, a rupture does not always mean that the relationship is over.

It does mean something needs attention.

And when trust weakens, leaders may be more likely to overlook or pretend the rupture didn't happen.

Trust is then further damaged when the leaders defend, minimize, blame, or rush people to move on before repair occurs.

Repair requires humility.

A trustworthy leader may say, I did not handle that well.

I can see how that affected you.

I missed something important.

I should have followed up sooner.

I want to understand the impact, not just explain my intentions or I want to be clear about what will be different going forward.

Repair does not require the leader to carry false guilt, but it does require leaders to take responsibility for their part.

The stronger the rupture, the more repair may require additional time, changed behavior, and repeated consistency.

An apology may open the door.

It is the changed actions that keep it open.

You understand the risk.

Trust requires vulnerability.

So leaders must understand what they are asking their people to risk.

When a direct report tells the truth, they may risk being labeled as a difficult employee or not a team player.

A confused team member may risk appearing incompetent.

Shared ideas may risk rejection.

If a team member gives feedback upward, they may fear retaliation.

A request for help may be seen as order weakness.

A person may not feel brave enough to own a mistake and may risk punishment.

A trustworthy Leader does not treat those risks lightly.

They ask, what does this person risk by being honest with me?

What would make this conversation feel safe or unsafe?

What past experiences might shape how they hear me?

What power do I hold in this relationship?

What could they lose if I mishandle what they share?

Understanding the risk does not mean removing all discomfort.

Growth often involves discomfort, accountability can involve discomfort and change often involves discomfort.

But discomfort is not the same as an unnecessary threat.

A leader can create enough safety for honesty While maintaining standards I.e.

Emotionally intelligent leadership s Support through Consistency People do not trust intentions they never experience.

Support must become visible.

It must show up in follow through, in fairness, clarity, coaching availability, listening, recognition, appreciation, development, barrier, remote removal, resource advocacy, confidentiality when appropriate Consistency during pressure.

This list is by no means exhaustive.

However, a leader may believe I support my team.

However, the better question is, does my team experience my support consistently enough to trust it?

That is where many leadership gaps appear.

One time support may be appreciated.

Support repeatedly becomes believable.

A leader who is supportive only when things are calm may feel risky when pressure rises.

A leader who listens only when convenient may not feel safe when the issue is serious.

Leaders who follow through only sometimes may create uncertainty.

So the psychological safety is by no means regulated to just the team members, but the leaders as well.

Trust can grow when that support becomes a pattern.

Inconsistency turns that intention into evidence.

T Take the Next trustworthy Action Trust is not built by one speech, rebuilt by one apology, sustained by one good meeting, but rather it grows through repeated observable action.

The final T asks, what is the next trustworthy action?

Not the biggest action and not the most dramatic action, just the next action.

That may be a follow up.

When you would say making a clarifying decision, protecting confidence, admitting what you don't know, giving credit, owning a mistake, removing a barrier, or even just checking in after a difficult conversation.

Trustworthy action gives people new evidence.

It says, you do not have to trust my words alone.

Watch what I do next.

That matters.

Because trust is not built by asking people to forget.

It's built by giving them a better pattern to remember.

The Trust Loop the final tee is not the finish line.

It is the next lap.

In an endurance race, one lap does not win the race.

Each lap gives the driver another opportunity to adjust, refine, respond in advance.

The same is true with trust.

After a leader takes the next trustworthy action, the work is not done.

The leader loops back.

Trust is not a ladder, it is a loop.

The leader may ask again what truth needs to be Told with care.

Now what Rupture still needs repair?

What risk is this person still carrying?

What support becomes more consistent?

Or what is the next trustworthy action?

Then the leader runs the lap again.

This is where systems thinking becomes useful.

A leader should notice sometimes with practice, whether an action is producing greater clarity, honesty, a connection and confidence.

If the trust is growing, persevere.

If the trust is not landing, then pivot.

If the person still feels unsafe, revisit the risk.

If a deeper breach is revealed, return to repair.

If the support is inconsistent, strengthen the pattern.

If the leader discovers a new truth, tell it with care.

Each loop is another lap around the track.

Each lap is another opportunity to advance towards a stronger relationship.

Each lap helps the leader refine the practice.

Trust is built, tested, repaired, refined and strengthened over time.

Building trust from the beginning.

For a new leader, a new team member or a new relationship, the trust model begins fresh.

You still tell the truth with care.

Be clear about expectations.

Be honest about what you know, don't know, or what you're still learning.

If there's a potential for any ruptures, address them before they happen, if possible.

If you miss a follow up, own it.

If a message lands poorly, address it.

Understand the risks as well.

Much as possible, recognize that a new employee may be watching closely to determine whether honesty is safe.

Support through consistency and don't make promises.

Casually do what you say you'll do.

Take the next trustworthy action.

Follow through early.

Keep commitments, ask good questions and protect the dignity.

A new relationship does not begin with deep trust.

It begins with the opportunity.

Leaders can use that opportunity well.

Mending trust when it is broken.

When trust has been broken, the model still applies.

However, the leader should not be quick to return to vulnerability.

Broken trust means the risk feels higher.

The person may be cautious and hold back.

They may test the leadership's consistency and they may listen politely but wait for evidence that is understandable.

A leader who wants to mend trust must be patient, tell the truth with care, name what happened, repair the rupture, own the impact, evaluate the risk.

Discover what the other person now risks by trusting again.

Support through consistency and let it be.

Change behavior becomes visible over time.

Take the next trustworthy action, loop back and repeat.

Trust repair is not proven by the leader's desire to move forward.

It is proven by the patterns that make moving forward safer.

The Ask Here is the ask for the week.

Choose one relationship where trust matters or someone with whom trust needs a little tune up.

Nothing too deep or severe here.

Once you have someone in mind, then ask yourself.

What risk am I asking this person to take with me?

And what trustworthy action would make that risk feel more acceptable?

Use the trust model, Tell the truth with care, repair the rupture, understand the risks, support through consistency and take the next trustworthy action.

Then remember the final T is not the finish line, it is the next lap.

Loop back and refine.

Persevere where trust is growing.

Pivot where that action is not landing.

Repeat until the relationship has enough evidence to make the trust reasonable.

The Bridge to Choose to Lead Trust to Lead brings us to the climax of the Victory Leadership to Lead series.

The next episode will bring the series to a close with choose to Lead Lead to Victory Turning Leadership Intention into Practice Leadership is a choice.

Making room is a choice.

Serving others, speaking with candor and kindness, helping others grow and building trust are choices and turning intention into practice is where the leadership can become real.

Final Thought Trust is not owed because of a title, it is extended when vulnerability feels worth the risk.

Leaders cannot force that.

However, they can become more trustworthy by telling the truth with care.

Repairing the rupture, better understanding the risk that others carry.

Convey support through consistency, take the next trustworthy action and then loop back and run the next lap.

Because trust isn't built one moment, it is built in repeated moments where people learn.

This leader sees the risks, they honor the relationship, they follow through, they offer reconciliation, and they can be trusted with what matters.

When leaders make vulnerability worth the risk, they create the space for people to to be more honest.

Bring more honesty, courage, creativity and commitment into the workplace.

That is good leadership.

And good leadership leads to victory.

Thank you everybody.

I will see you in the winner's circle.

Take care everyone.

Thank you for joining me today on the Victory Leadership Podcast.

If you found value in this episode, be sure to subscribe and share it with someone who is committed to growing as a leader.

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As always, good leadership leads to victory.

I'll see you in the winner circle.