

Trust!

As coaches, Shelley MacDougall and I are acutely aware of the importance that trust plays in the relationships between us and our clients. If trust doesn't exist in these relationships, there is really no point in having them. Trust is critical. It is also critical in the relationships we have with friends, our spouses, our kids, each other as business partners, our mastermind colleagues ... I can't think of a relationship where trust is not important.

For a club manager it is critical as well. We have seen many occasions where the questioning of trust has made one side or the other question the value of the relationship. The club manager needs to trust and be trusted by the board, the members, the management team, the staff, the accountants, the association colleagues and the community.

We are being asked more and more to work with organizations to help build an environment of trust. We often ask questions to a group of people about the level of trust that exists in the organization and we are often assured that everyone trusts each other. When we then speak to individual members almost everyone tells us that trust doesn't exist. The truth is that in the group situation there isn't enough trust for people to be honest. In the absence of trust, things happen slowly. Successes happen in spite of each other rather than because of each other. Everything is more dramatic and trickier.

When there is clearly a lack of trust relationships break down or come to an end.

Whether you are interested in building or maintaining trust with a group of people or with one individual, here are some ideas that might help you in the process.

1. Having the intention of trust

When people are in a relationship and they have the intention of making it a relationship based on trust, they are more likely to actually have it. Most people think that trust in a relationship goes without saying. The reality is that when people have the intention of trust they are more likely to have discussions about what that looks like and what kinds of things get in the way of creating and maintaining an environment of trust.

2. Make the decision to be trusting and trustworthy

Many people miss the correlation between receiving people's trust and trusting people. It truly is a two way street. It makes sense that a thief wouldn't be very trusting. People that would hurt others are more likely to guard against getting hurt. If you want to receive the trust of others, work on trusting others.

3. Building a track record of showing you can be trusted

Some people trust others until they are given a reason not to. Others don't trust people until they are absolutely sure they can. Real trust for most people is earned and happens over time. When someone has demonstrated trustworthiness over time their trust is seldom questioned.

4. Giving others evidence that you mean them no harm

One of the core needs we have as human beings is the need for security. When people we are in relationship with know we mean them no harm, they are more likely to trust us. We talk about the mutual decision to never intentionally do anything to harm the other. Because we are human we might from time to time do something to cause some small harm. If harm is done we could trust that the other person would bring it up or be open to having it brought up. Making sure neither party is harmed builds and perpetuates trust.

5. Being vulnerable and finding out that it was ok

The need to be strong, in control or infallible is a desirable goal but it can also be seen as lack of trust. When we are willing to admit to our mistakes, show our flaws and admit to our humanness we are showing someone that we trust them enough to do it. Contrary to what most men have grown up learning, vulnerability can show strength. Trusting takes courage. When you trust you are vulnerable.

6. Celebrating the vulnerability of others

When others are being vulnerable with us they are giving us some trust. If they are punished or pay a price for their vulnerability we shouldn't expect to see them vulnerable again in the future. Acknowledging others for their courage builds trust.

7. Learning how to say what you need to say

Communication is a key element to a relationship of trust. Most times when we are working with people where a breakdown of trust has occurred it has often been a case of the communication not being intentional or coming from the wrong intent. If we go into a conversation without being connected to the intent of building trust or not harming the other, we can miss the mark. Often people go into a conversation with the intent to win or be right and then wonder why trust doesn't exist.

8. Being able to say anything and know you will be ok

When trust truly exists you can say almost anything and still be ok. You can even make a mistake and communicate poorly and the person that trusts you will know what your intent is. The other side of this is that you don't have to leave things unsaid. Withholding important information can almost feel like being lied to for the other person in a trusting relationship. Getting to the point in a relationship where you don't have to withhold information is pretty powerful.

We hope some of these thoughts support you in building strong trusting relationships with the important people in your lives. There may be some people who come into our lives that simply can't be trusted. That topic may be worthy of a separate article but in the meantime if we focus on our role in building trusting relationships, we are more likely to have them.