BUILD TRUST TO
BUILD STRONG
Working Relationships

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Trust plays a very significant role in any organization. It is important to build employee trust for better productivity and healthy environment. No organization can grow without a powerful and committed workforce. Without employees' support and trust, progress is just not possible. Therefore it is crucial for any organization to keep reviewing scope for improvement in its own health so that a congenial environment is created which is beneficial for both the employer and the employees.

Professionals take great pride and are committed to their work but may not feel the same about the organization they work for. They may have a high regard for their manager and yet lack confidence in the top management. To put it straight they are not able to identify with the organization they work for. How important is this – both for the organization as well as for the employees? What binds employees to the organization and how significant is this binding for the health of the organization? The article will discuss these issues and also suggest ways which can help build a healthy environment in any organization.

Build Trust – The driving force
No employer or manager can accomplish any goal without a good, productive workforce. For a healthy and productive environment it is very important that a mutual trust is developed, more so for the organization. How can an organization ensure this? Before we discuss this we need to understand that it is not the organization that can foster trust but it is the people working there. Organization can define policies but essentially it is the way the leaders or managers conduct themselves, which determines the level of trust in any organization. It is of utmost importance that the management understands the value of trust and learns to promote trust.

The reasons for mistrust – Every employee needs to feel valued and trusted; and strongly wants to believe that the company is honestly interested in his or her best welfare.

Since managers are the initiators of trust, their behavior plays a crucial role in this. The most damaging behavior of managers is lack of communication and transparency. The moment the mangers start saying one thing and doing another, suspicion starts breeding. Company's strategies need to be communicated well by the managers. After all, all employees are part of the company and they need to know what's happening.

Recent economic turmoil has made it more difficult for companies to maintain trust. Recent layoffs have resulted in reduced company loyalty and low morale. Even people who have remained with the company will try to leave as soon as the market improves because they have lost trust in the company.

Cost of mistrust – *It may not be visible but the company loses in a big way by losing the trust of its employees. There is decreased commitment and productivity, and increased employee turnover. Trust makes employees work harder even if the company is going through bad times. It is a known fact that people work harder for*

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managers they trust and respect. But a non-trusting environment leads to de-motivated, de-energized, unproductive workers. There is total loss of spirit and potential, and people are on the lookout for better opportunities. Majority of workforce cannot focus on their job.

Secret about trust – *The integrity of the leadership of any organization is important to build employee trust.*
A strong vision combined with transparent communication can work wonders.

Identifying with the organization
Somebody said that an employer and an employee's interest can never match. True. But an ideal situation for an organization to grow would be when the employer and the employee's goals match. Only then an employee in a true sense would be able to identify with the company he is working and contribute 100%. How does one achieve this if at all it is possible?

Clear Vision - *Charting out a vision of the organization and communicating it to all employees is the first step to build in trust among employees. Managers need to be clear about the vision and make sure it is shared by all employees. Many a time the employees do the job assigned to them without any idea about the ultimate goal of the company. This often leads to confusion and employees are not able to connect with the organization goal even remotely. This situation can be very dangerous for any organization. An inspiring shared vision can work wonders.*

Part of the organization – Employees need to understand that they are part of the organization and are equally responsible for the growth of the company. It is basically a manager's role to ensure that the employees consider themselves a part of the company. The staff has to be encouraged to take responsibility and be creative.

They should be encouraged to come up with questions and solutions should also be sought from them. The moment the staff becomes a party in decision-making, he becomes a part of the company and feels responsible for the growth of the company.

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Openness and Transparency- *Organizations thrive on clarity and honesty. It is very important that the organizations promote openness and transparency. Strategies and policies of the organization should be communicated to the employees along with the rationale behind the decisions. Employees need to understand why certain decisions were taken. Genuine participation of all employees should be encouraged. Managers need to be truthful and open with information. Though it is true that management cannot become 100% transparent and divulge all details to employees but it is also true that the moment the employees get this feeling that management is hiding facts, this could be the end of a healthy relationship. Managers play a vital role here in building trust and not conveying facts in ambiguous manner.*

Strong Leadership –*Leaders play a vital role in building trust. Trust is mostly about competence and integrity. These values have to be demonstrated by leaders through action. Leaders have to set examples and be with the team and not consider themselves in a different league. Any rule or policy made in the organization should be followed by the leaders first. If leaders don't follow rules and only the*

staff is made to follow them, this can lead to a very unhealthy environment. Leaders need to establish credibility, reliability and commitment first to be able to build trust among the staff. Leaders are also part of the workforce and if they are seen to be getting preferential treatment a barrier is immediately created. It becomes 'They' and 'We'. And henceforth no employee can identify with the organization.

Communication- This could be considered the key to building trust. It may not be possible to communicate day-to-day business operations to all employees but there could be a system of communication. Weekly or quarterly meetings could also help. Any change in policy should be communicated in a proper manner by the managers and the employees should not get them through grapevine. Communication should always happen both ways. Staff also should be given enough space to vent out their feelings and views. Organization can use various tools to communicate. It could be in the form of newsletter, bulletin boards, meetings etc. Good communication helps in stopping rumors and the employees also feel connected to the organization. Things should never come as a surprise to employees. They should be made to feel as a part of the system. Employees need to be treated as mature responsible adults and not just as workers who are there only to take orders. Communication could include telling employees about - Where the company stands / Future plans / Where the employee stands / Feedback (both positive and negative) / Policy changes / New policies etc.

Consistency- The management needs to be consistent about personnel policies. Any change needs to be communicated well before implementation and the rationale also explained. Managers need to be consistent in what they say. Saying different things on different days can ruin trust immediately and employees will never be able to trust the manager or the organization. They need to know exactly what is happening and not hear different stories and rumors.

Role Clarity- All will agree that role clarity is the key to the performance of any employee. Studies have also shown that people with higher role clarity performed better than people with lower role clarity. More than helping in productivity role clarity helps an employee easily identify with the organization he is working for. Role clarity makes him connect to organization better. If he is clear about his role and responsibility, he will be in a better position to handle his duties, and will not be just taking orders. He will consider himself more of a part of the organization and will connect better.

Growth Opportunities- Personal growth is very important to all of us. Any organization which provides opportunity to employees for personal development and growth is bound to gain respect of its staff. Managers need to take genuine interest in the personal growth of all employees. Career growth plans and development opportunities for each employee will go a long way in building lasting relationships and strong bonding.

Conclusion
Trust is essential for both employee retention and employee motivation. Organizations need to demonstrate that they are guided by ethical standards and the same has to be exhibited. The bottom line is being genuine. If the organization gets genuine in the welfare of its employees, the employees will respond in the same manner. Employees are mature adults who can easily identify efforts of employers. The day this trust is built, employees are able to easily identify themselves with the organization and they may stick with the company even during bad times.

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