



Instills trust – KornFerry Competency (Measurable Leadership Behavior)

Gaining the confidence and trust of others through honesty, integrity and authenticity

Trust lies at the heart of effective relationships. Whether in or out of the workplace, trust generates feelings of goodwill. It enables successful collaboration and more productive outcomes. When there's trust things go more smoothly. People pull together, relying on each other to do their part. They're better able to work through conflicts and tough times. Without trust, there are unnecessary speed bumps, heightens doubt, dips in performance. Being trustworthy is about being honest and authentic. It's about acting with integrity. Showing consistency. Being credible. If you're trusted, it means others can count on you to deliver and to look after their highest interests. Trust is based on reciprocity - you need to give it to get it.

"No legacy is so rich as honesty." William Shakespeare

Skilled

- Follows through on commitments
- Is seen as direct and truthful
- Keeps confidences
- Practices what he/she preaches
- Shows consistency between words and actions

Less skilled

- Lacks consistent follow-through on commitments
- Betrays confidences and covers up mistakes
- Misrepresents facts for personal gain
- Has trouble keeping confidences
- Makes promises but doesn't always keep them

Talented

- Gains the confidence and trust of others easily
- Honors commitments and keeps confidences
- Expresses self in a credible and transparent manner
- Models high standards of honesty and integrity

Overused Skill

- May push openness and honesty to the point of being disruptive
- May come across as overly judgmental of those not quite as overtly authentic



Some possible causes of lower skill

Causes help to explain why a person may have trouble with Instills trust. When seeking to increase skill, it's helpful to consider how these might play out in certain situations. And remember that all of these can be addressed if you are motivated to do so.

- Lacks follow – through
- Guarded: holds back
- Won't admit mistakes
- Breaks confidentiality
- Overpromises
- Doesn't "walk the talk"
- Puts self-interest first
- Avoids sharing information
- Bends the rules
- Unclear about own values

Brain Booster

Neurochemistry can shed some light on how to build trust and foster a sense of team, which can lead to greater productivity. There are some basic sources of stress that decrease trust, undermine relationships, and reduce productivity

- Being evaluated by others in a work setting
- Being evaluated by others in a social setting
- Rejection
- Unfairness
- Dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty
- Delivering results under pressure

Obviously, many of these are an inherent part of living and working in the 21st century. While providing feedback to help people grow can build trust, constantly scrutinizing people's work can erode it. Find the right balance. If you can reduce these stress triggers among your team members, you will be able to reduce cortisol levels, have happier, healthier, more relaxed and more productive team members. Encourage team members with positive comments. Build a sense of community and cohesion so that no one feels like an outsider. Be Fair. Help people find answers to questions that are preventing them from getting their work done. And, when you don't have the answers, help team members define what they do have control over, what choices they can make. Finally, in a time of doing more with less, be compassionate about how much you are expecting and ask yourself how you can do a better job of balancing how realistic and ambitious your expectations are.

Tips to develop Instills trust

1. **Failing to deliver?** Be more reliable. People rely on each other to follow through on their commitments. To meet deadlines. To contribute their fair share. The research of Mishra and Mishra shows that reliability is one of the quickest ways you can demonstrate trust. You can show it during your first meeting with someone by being on time. By returning calls. By passing on information you promised to send. By giving people a heads up if circumstances have changed or trouble is brewing. Failing to do these things damages



relationships and decreases productivity. If following through isn't your strength, identify the main reasons and address them. If you tend to forget, write things down or set up alerts on your smartphone. If you're often running behind, work on better time management. At the beginning and end of each day, review the commitments you've made and decide when you'll follow through.

2. **Trouble with consistency?** Align your words and actions. Probably nothing chills trust more than a person saying one thing and doing something else. People want consistency. You can deliver an inspiring message with convincing calls-to-action. But, not if the next day you do something quite contrary, people may no longer buy it. Worse yet, they may question your credibility. Having integrity means representing yourself accurately. Knowing who you are. What you believe. And practicing what you preach regardless of the setting. If you're not sure if there's a gap between your words and deeds, ask someone you trust to give you feedback. Then you can begin to close any gaps.
3. **Withholding too much?** Share more openly. Do you often keep things to yourself? Tend to hold back information or opinions? Err on the side of non- disclosure? It may not be your intention, but people around you may begin to wonder. Wonder what you're up to, what your agenda is, whether your hoping to gain an advantage over them. Why aren't you sharing more openly? It may be that you have a reserved nature or prefer privacy. Or that you don't want to lose control or appear less authoritative. Regardless of the reasons, it may be time to make some adjustments. Organizations function on the flow of information. Greater transparency is expected at all levels, in and outside the firm. So, find out what people want and need to know and begin to comply. Sending information on relevant topics is a start. Better still, talk or meet with people for open, two- way exchanges. Practice showing and telling it like it is.
4. **Trying too hard to impress?** Don't exaggerate or overpromise. Does your enthusiasm to make the sale or win approval cause you to commit to too many things? Do you stretch the truth? Say "yes" to a stakeholder or customer by default? The customer you gain by overpromising is the customer you may lose forever when they find out you can't deliver. Word spreads quickly. When doubts are raised, customers go on guard- not sure they'll believe the next thing you'll say, ready to shift their loyalty somewhere else. Reflect a bit on when and where you tend to exaggerate. Is it under most circumstances or when the pressure is particularly intense? Were you rewarded for it in another setting? Is it serving you well now? Observe your patterns and begin adjusting your approach. Be authentic- we're in an era when truth carries greater weight than fiction. Don't promise something you can't deliver. If you don't know for sure, say "I'll look into it and get back with you when I do."
5. **Unable to meet expectations?** Grow your capabilities. If someone isn't trusted, it's not necessarily about a lack of honesty or integrity. It might be that people lack confidence in your ability to perform your job well. To meet or exceed requirements. To execute at the top of your game. As a result, they probably feel on edge, especially if their success depends on your contribution. If more than one colleague is checking up on you, questioning your judgement or skill, it may be a wake- up call. Conduct an inventory of



your strengths and weaknesses. Gather your feedback from a variety of people and work to gain skill where you are not measuring up.

Want to Learn more? Take a deep dive...

Graybill, M. (2013, August 8). *Leadership fundamentals: Transparency and trust*. About Leaders

Llopis, G. (2012, September 10). *5 Powerful things happen when a leader is transparent*. Forbes

Scott, S. (2011, June 30). TEDxovelake – Susan Scott – *the case for radical transparency* [YouTube]. TED

6. **Difficulty admitting mistakes?** Take responsibility. Everyone makes mistakes. It's how you deal with them that determines whether or not people view you as trustworthy. History is full of examples where the cover-up of a mistake does more damage than the original misstep. Resist any temptation to hide it, deny it, play dumb or blame someone else. Apologize with sincerity. Admit when you were wrong as soon as you can, informing everyone who may be affected. Offer to help with workarounds or potential repercussions. Share what you learned and what steps you'll take to prevent it from happening again. When someone's feelings have been hurt, trust is particularly fragile, so take time to talk things through. It's never too late to repair a damaged relationship. Come to terms with your part in the situation. Take steps to rectify things. Finally, move on. Dwelling on past mistakes distracts you from doing your best now.
7. **Tempted to spread someone else's news?** Maintain confidentiality. Some people are viewed as untrustworthy because they've shared information intended to be kept confidential. Revisit what keeping a confidence means. Some guidelines: Ask up front, "Is this to be kept confidential?" "Is this mine to share?" Don't let social media norms sway you – always keep personal information someone shares to yourself. Read and follow your organization's guiding principles. If someone shares legal or ethical breaches, let them know you can't promise confidentiality. In most cases apply the golden rule- would you want someone to pass it on if you shared it? If you're not sure, ask. It doesn't take many slip-ups before people say you can't be trusted with confidential information. Err on the side of discretion.
8. **Lacking an ethical compass?** Take corrective action. People rarely start their careers planning to be unethical. More often it comes about slowly. Occasionally taking home office supplies, fudging numbers on an expense report. It might spread- condoning unfair treatment of employees, using lower quality parts that could jeopardize product safety, keeping silent about corruption or fraud. There are countless ways to rationalize unethical choices: Everyone else is doing it. Nobody will find out. My boss told me to. It's not exactly illegal. The end justifies the means. We didn't have time to check. It won't hurt anybody. Review and comply with the ethical codes provided by your organization and profession. But don't stop there – identify your own code of conduct. What values will you choose to uphold? What lines will you refuse to cross? Work with leaders to incorporate practices to detect and report missteps. Talk about how to handle "gray zones", where there are no easy answers. How to do what is right, even if it's unpopular.



How to surface conflicts of interest. What may seem minor at the time can ripple out, harming the reputations of both individuals and organizations.

Want to learn more? Take a deep dive...

Bailey, S. (2013 May 15). Business leaders beware: Ethical drift makes standards slip. Forbes

Guest, G. (2013, May 1). Workplace ethics rub off on employees. Futurity.org.

Pastin, M. (2013, November 11). The different ways people handle ethical issues in the workplace. Bloomberg Businessweek

9. **Perceived to be self - centered?** Put the team or organization first. Do others sense you care more about your own agenda than the larger group's? If so, they may doubt whether you'll operate in their best interests. Shuffle and prioritize the team. Talk about what "we" have accomplished – not "I" or "me". Recognize others' contributions and spread credit where it's due. Research shows you can also build trust through self-sacrifice. This means doing things that postpone your own interests, privileges, or rewards for the benefit of the group. Like working overtime with the team to finish the task. Giving up your weekend or holiday to meet a deadline. If you're a leader with status, it could mean relinquishing your large office when space is tight. Or taking a pay cut during challenging times. Research shows that trust built through self-sacrifice can have a long- term positive impact.
10. **Lack of trust between groups?** Build cross-boundary bridges. Sometimes trust is high for people within a team or department, but not between groups or functions. Maybe there's a long history of "us vs. them". Maybe something recent has caused friction. Maybe you stereotype each other. Or just don't know each other. To better coordinate efforts and leverage synergies, foster cross -boundary trust. Find out what is causing any past or current problems. If your team hasn't delivered the goods, decide how you'll fix things to build credibility. If the others have fallen short, clarify what's needed going forward. In all cases, look for ways to connect. Identify common objectives and values. Share resources, expertise, information. Collaborate to solve problems and drive new initiatives. Incorporate getting-to-know-you time in neutral settings. Make use of what the authors of Boundary Spanning Leadership call "attractor spaces" – informal community spots like libraries or cafes that encourage relationships to form spontaneously. Become a self-appointed bridge-builder, forging intergroup trust.
11. **Sense trust may be eroding?** Pay attention to warning signs. Keep alert to signs that trust may be breaking down in your department or team. Are people talking about one another behind their backs? Are they withholding information or resources? Are they undermining each other to make themselves look good? Stifling authentic feeling about issues? Do some members cast blame or criticism unfairly? Do people feel compelled to cover their tracks? Do decisions get made during sidebar conversations or in cliques? Trust takes a long time to build and can deteriorate rather quickly. Don't just wait and see what happens. Directly confront warning signs with the group. If things are especially tense, ask a facilitator or coach to help get the group back on track through a series of candid conversations.



Want to learn more? Take a deep dive...

Bryant, A. (2011, July 30). *The trust that makes a team click*. The New York Times.

Clark, D. (2012, May 23). *Five ways to become a better team player*. Forbes

Voortman, P. (2013, May 23) *Trust in organizations*: Pauline Voortman at TEDxRadboudU 2013 [YouTube] TED

12. **Reluctant to bring your heart to work?** Show genuine concern for people's needs. Many think the workplace should be all about business. That compassion doesn't belong. A culture of caring is good for business – it strengthens trust and collaboration. Showing you care goes beyond remembering someone's birthday. For a trust-based relationship to flourish, there needs to be mutual concern for what matters to the other person. Listen closely to discover what that is. Even five minutes of focused, quality time can go a long way. Involve people in decisions that are important to them. Ask what you can do to help them. Follow up. When times are tough, be even more accessible, providing empathy and support.

Job assignments

- Make peace with a colleague or customer you've disappointed in the past, apologizing for any mistakes and taking steps to renew trust.
- Mediate a conflict between two people or groups, where you'll need to gain the trust of both parties and facilitate an honest discussion leading towards resolution
- Be a liaison or spokesperson for your organization in the local community, requiring you to instill trust while addressing the concerns they have related to your company's practices.
- Lead a team or group that is experiencing resistance due to a change that was imposed on them (e.g., new structure, downsizing); practice restoring trust between the group and management.
- Teach a leadership or orientation course/webinar on your organization's code of ethics, including discussion on how to show integrity and handle challenging dilemmas.

Take time to reflect...

If you're concerned that others don't have full trust in you...

...then find out why and take clear action to turn things around. Do the right thing – always. Be patient. Trust cannot be claimed; it needs to be earned.

If you talk a good story but don't follow through...

...then be aware that people will soon lose confidence if they hear words but don't see the action. Demonstrate your commitment right through to the result.

If you sense that gossip is running rampant...

...then understand that allowing negative "hearsay" can lead to a culture of distrust. Address rumors with speed and honesty. Focus on the underlying reasons.

"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest." Mark Twain



Recommended search terms

If you would like to explore Instills trust further, try searching online using the following terms:

- Building trust in the workplace
- Business ethics
- Effective business communication
- Personal integrity in business
- Reliable employee performance
- Transparent leadership

More help...

Contact your HR Business Partners to access their copy of KornFerry's FYI (For Your Improvement) book which provides links to more resources.

You can also go to www.kornferry.com/fyi-resources and link directly to the KornFerry sight and access to your own copy of the KornFerry FYI competency development guide. .

Lombardo, M. M., & Eichinger, R. W. (2004). *FYI: For your improvement: a guide for development and coaching*.