

# Application Guide

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST IN LEADERSHIP



### **BOTTOM LINE:**

When there are gaps between what we expect people to do and what they actually do, we should choose to fill those gaps with trust rather than suspicion.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- I. Gaps happen when there is a difference between what we expect people to do and what they actually do.
- II. Leaders choose what goes in those gaps. We choose to believe the best and fill the gap with trust, or we choose to believe the worst and fill the gap with suspicion.
  - A. Example: Lack of follow-through can create a gap, and you have to choose what to fill it with.
    1. Trust: They have a good explanation.
    2. Suspicion: They are irresponsible and don't think this is important.
    3. Healthy organizations are full of people who choose to believe the best rather than assume the worst and **fill the gap with trust.**
- III. Filling that gap with trust is a discipline, and it's up to the leader to foster this kind of environment. When you discipline yourself to give a generous, healthy explanation, you will positively impact the work culture.
- IV. We tend to choose suspicion over trust because:
  - A. We're human.
  - B. We tend to project and make excuses for our inability or unwillingness to follow through. Leaders who habitually assume the worst about others are often assuming about others what is secretly true about themselves.
  - C. We have a cognitive bias: the fundamental attribution error. We assign other people's behavior to their character while we let ourselves off the hook for similar behavior based on circumstances.
  - D. We base current circumstances on past experiences, fears, or insecurities.
- V. Distrust can be self-fulfilling, contagious, and detrimental to an organization.
  - A. If you don't trust someone long enough, even if they are trustworthy, they will eventually do something that feeds the suspicion, and you begin to connect dots that you've been waiting to see.
  - B. When we think someone suspects us for something, we become more cautious, less open about mistakes, and slower to admit and own mistakes—which looks suspicious and confirms their suspicion.
  - C. Eventually, this leads to a culture of secrecy forcing everyone in the organization to be less forthcoming with their mistakes.
- VI. Benefits of extending trust:
  - A. **Fosters innovation:** Trust breathes life into the areas of experimentation, innovation, and creativity—all of which involve some short-term failure. If people aren't free to fail, you will never get their best.
  - B. **Fuels productivity:** When leaders are afraid of failure and don't trust their employees as much, they put a lid on the progress of the organization.
  - C. **Fuels information sharing:** When you have trust, information doesn't have to follow the path created by the org chart—you can just tell who needs to know when they need to know and skip

# Application Guide

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST IN LEADERSHIP



the game of telephone.

D. **Exposes untrustworthy people:** The best way to find out whether or not someone is trustworthy is to trust them.

VII. When someone continues to create a gap between what we expect and what we experience we must confront them. Confronting them is still a sign of trust because you trust them to have a conversation with you and you believe they have an explanation for the disruptive pattern.

VIII. Four commitments leaders should make to their direct reports:

- A. When there is a gap between what you expect and what you experience, **choose to believe the best.**
- B. When other people assume the worst about an employee, you will come to their defense.
- C. If what you experience begins to erode your trust, you will go directly to the person who is involved.
- D. When you realize that you will not be able to deliver on a promise to someone, you will inform that person ahead of time.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. How do you tend to respond when someone in your organization does not do what you expected them to do?
2. Have you ever had a leader who didn't trust the team? How did that affect the team dynamic?
3. Have you ever had a leader who did trust the team? How did that affect the team dynamic?
4. How could fostering an environment of trust specifically benefit your organization today?
5. Which of the four commitments do you find the most challenging? How can you work to implement it anyway?

### NEXT EPISODE

If you liked this episode, a great next listen would be: [The Power of Human Energy with Angela Ahrendts.](#)

### LEAVE A REVIEW:

If this podcast has made you a better leader, you can help share it by leaving a quick Apple Podcasts review. You can visit [Apple Podcasts](#) or on your iOS device, and then go to the "Reviews" section. Thank you for sharing!