



UNIT II: Interpersonal Leadership Skills

Module 1: Building Trust

There are two parts to trust: an intangible, “feeling” part and a performance record that confirms this trust. An active feeling of trust is confidence in leadership, indicated in ability and integrity. Trust is also expressed by the absence of worry or suspicion. Our most productive relationships are already based on trust, sometimes unrecognized and frequently taken for granted. The track record is a confirmation of well-placed trust.

Trust is a vital ingredient in all relationships we develop during our lives. If we find it hard to trust someone, we are less likely to talk to them. But, if someone trusts us and we trust them, then we can develop a good relationship with open communication and fewer arguments. It’s the feeling of safeness you have with another human being.¹

How Does Trust Develop?

Many scholars have created lists of the characteristics of leaders. Trust always makes the list. Trust develops as the cumulative effect of one-on-one, day-to-day relationships. Trust is won or lost by how well you know yourself, how open you are to letting others see your real self, and how well you show your interest in others. These personal actions depend on you as an individual, regardless of the organization, committee, or other group.⁸

An interesting metaphor for trust is to think of it as an emotional bank account. If I make deposits with you through courtesy, kindness, honesty and promise keeping, I build up a reserve. Your trust toward me becomes higher, and I can call on that trust when I need to. When the account is high, communication is easy, instant and effective. But, if I show discourtesy, disrespect, threats, or just do not listen, my emotional bank account will become overdrawn. Trust needs continuing deposits. Furthermore, it takes more deposits to outweigh a negative or withdrawal. One guideline is that every negative encounter requires six positive encounters to restore the original level.²

You can show that you are trustworthy by being responsible. Being open and honest with people is very important. In any relationship, it takes time and effort to develop trust, and trust and commitment are closely related. If you trust more, you are willing to commit more. Each person must accept some responsibility.

Following principles of ethical decision making and action are vital to developing and maintaining trust among leaders and followers.

Perceptions of Trust

Trust exists only in our minds. Trust depends on individual conduct, but also on how that conduct is perceived. Perceptions are difficult things to agree on. Involved people may try to come to an understanding (if not agreement) about behaviors, perceptions, interpretations and expectations.

There is no guaranteed process to change a trustless group, and there is no specific outcome to measure. However, spending time and attention improving the