

4 ways to forge lasting bonds

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Executive
Leadership

Your everyday behavior as a leader, along with the policies you put into practice, can create a culture of trust. And high-trust organizations tend to produce better results.

When employees trust each other and their supervisors, they collaborate more freely and communicate more forthrightly. Rumors don't spread. There's less malicious gossip. And people root for each other's success.

Four ways to foster more trust:

1. Recognize good deeds. Begin staff meetings by praising individuals who have gone out of their way to help others. When employees see that you're eager to recognize good deeds, they will look for opportunities to deliver more of what you want.

2. Seek new information. Many leaders assume it's their job to have all the answers. But you breed more trust by admitting what you don't know—and learning from others.

When launching a new initiative, start by acknowledging gaps in your knowledge. Pose questions and gather information. When employees see that you're genuinely intent on learning, they will exhibit more mutual trust and openness.

3. Ask for help. Rather than proclaiming ambitious goals and urging people to push themselves as hard as they can, try a different approach. Set a direction and then enlist others' assistance to help you advance where you want to go.

4. Show interest in others' feelings. Observe the people around you at work. How do they look? What emotions do they reveal in their facial expressions and nonverbal cues?

Reflect on the feelings that you see in their faces. Use gentle language—and resist sweeping judgments—to show that you care about their well-being.

— Adapted from *The Trust Factor*, Paul Zak, AMACOM.