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Building Trust in the Workplace

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What is the level of trust in *your* organization? How do you know?

If you cannot answer these two questions, it's time to stop talking about trust and to start defining or describing it. Unless you and others can articulate what trust looks and feels like – i.e., you share a common "picture" of trust AND you personalize it – you can neither evaluate its presence or absence accurately nor develop and maintain trusting relationships effectively.

Here are some questions to help you begin to develop a common picture of trust in your workplace:

- How do you know when you trust others? That is, what must they do and say for you to conclude that they are trustworthy?

- Do others know what *they* must to do earn your trust?

- How do others know they can trust *you*?

- Do you know what *you* must do and say to earn others' trust?

Developing a common picture of trust is a key first step in building trusting relationships in the workplace. However, while it is essential, it is not sufficient. You also must personalize this value by ensuring that every individual can articulate clearly what trust means to him or her, AND how it relates to the organization's definition. Here are some additional steps that will get you started in moving forward:

- Define trust at the organizational level

- Describe in behavioral terms what people must experience (i.e., see, hear) to agree that they are giving AND receiving trust

- Practice engaging in these behaviors over time

- Give and receive feedback about these behaviors specifically

- Reward and support behaviors that demonstrate trust

Six months after engaging in these steps, ask yourself the two questions at the beginning of this article. The answers should be much different – as should your workplace environment. ➡

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