



WHY LEADERS FAIL

**AND THE 7 PRESCRIPTIONS
FOR SUCCESS**

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Chapter Two

They Torpedo Trust

If you don't have trust inside your company, then you can't transfer it to your customers.

—Roger Staubach

Trust is a critical element in the workplace. People have to trust each other on both big and small issues. Seemingly harmless requests or actions that undermine trust can have big consequences.

In a coaching engagement, we worked with a seasoned mid-level manager who was great with her people and respected by her bosses. She consistently came in under budget and delivered her projects ahead of schedule. She was focused, productive, and energetic.

This manager's team morale was high, and direct reports responded well to her leadership. Everyone seemed happy. From the outside, it appeared to be a perfect work environment. In our coaching, however, we encountered a huge problem; this manager did not trust her direct supervisor.

Why? Her direct supervisor had asked her to lie to his boss about his whereabouts. Her direct supervisor wanted his boss to think he was working harder than he actually was. He asked her to lie and say he was in meetings with clients when he was at the gym, at home for a long lunch, or golfing. At first, it was once or twice a month. Then it became once or twice a week.

This manager was put in an uncomfortable and untenable position. She wanted to focus on doing a good job for her boss and the organization, but she did not want to compromise her integrity by lying. She tried to cover for her boss as much as possible without outright lying, but the day came when the CEO cornered her and she told the truth. She was not sure how the conversation between the two leaders ensued, but her working relationship with both leaders was compromised. The CEO did not communicate back to this manager to assure her she did the

right thing. Instead, she was reprimanded and blamed by her direct supervisor for telling the truth.

The direct supervisor's boss no longer trusted the department, and support for that department quickly went downhill. Profit margins decreased. The talented manager found another job. The lying senior manager continued to lose good direct reports and his engagement scores continued in a downward spiral until he was fired.

Little lies can lead to big problems, and, as shown below, lies are not the only behaviors that lead to mistrust in relationships. Trust is a necessary factor in the workplace, and great leaders work hard to earn, and keep, the trust and confidence of their employees.

Why Trust at Work Matters

Why does it matter if employees trust their managers? When people do not trust their leaders, they are much more likely to leave their positions if the option is available to them. If you are in a leadership position and have a high rate of turnover among employees, one of the issues at play may be a lack of trust.

When we compare the survey results of the Best of the Best organizations to the Overall Benchmark organizations in our research, the Best of the Best employees rate their senior leaders 22.0 percentage points higher at being committed to building trust with employees. Employees at the Best of the Best organizations also trust the decisions of senior leaders at a higher rate than average employees.[1]

What undermines trust? It is a hard question to ask. It is an even harder question to get an honest answer to when you are the person in charge. We surveyed 75 junior military officers and asked them what their leaders do that cause them to lose trust. The most frequently stated answers are consistent with the reasons civilian employees give for not trusting their corporate business leaders.

Lying, not telling the whole story, or clouding intent topped the list. Most employees consider leaders lying to their people to be the equivalent of a mortal sin; it is virtually impossible to recover from. Other reasons the junior officers mentioned included:

- lack of transparency,
- acting or speaking disrespectfully,
- withholding information,
- creating uncertainty,
- stealing,
- not trusting subordinates,
- unethical enforcement,
- setting unattainable standards,
- gossiping or talking about other team members behind their backs,
- disloyalty and a lack of support for subordinates, and
- acting selfishly.

Path to Failure

Let's look at some of these issues and other transgressions that can undermine trust.

Lying

Nothing destroys the faith and confidence of people working in an organization faster than finding out their direct supervisor lied to them. It does not have to be a big lie. A small, seemingly inconsequential lie can have a huge impact on an employee's level of trust in a leader. If their leader is willing to lie to them about little things of little consequence, what prevents them from lying to them about matters of real importance?

Lying by Omission

Telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth seems like a good idea. So why is it so hard for leaders in organizations to tell the whole truth? Oftentimes, it is not that easy. Leaders often only have partial information themselves, or they provide information that is later

contradicted by updated information. Therefore, many leaders are in the habit of not conveying information until it can be verified multiple times. The problem with that delay is it creates uncertainty for the other team members. Every time employees feel uncertain about their future with the company, product issues, or personnel changes, it causes a loss of productivity and feeds mistrust.

Some leaders are also slow to realize that employees often find information faster than the hierarchy can promulgate it. This leaves leaders in the unenviable position of not sharing official information because they do not have it. By the time a leader lets people know what he knows, they have already received that information, and more.

Certain levels of leadership may also be restricted with regards to how much information they are allowed to provide their employees. In those instances, they need to be honest and let their employees know what they can provide and what they cannot provide. Employees will understand if the circumstances are adequately communicated.

Lacking Clear Communication

Imagine you are working at a job you love, in an organization you enjoy, for a manager you like. You have the education, technical knowledge, and real life experience that allow you to excel at this job. You have years of experience working as a successful manager, and you have an excellent reputation as a forward-thinking leader in both your organization and your industry. Then, you get a new supervisor.

Your new boss does not know you or anyone else. He asks lots of questions every time you make a decision. He wants to know details that are far below his pay grade, requiring you to spend a substantial amount of time responding to his seemingly endless queries for information.

You move some people around projects, and your new boss wants to know why. You let one employee leave early on Monday because they worked late last week, and your new boss wants to know why. It feels as if every decision you make is being questioned. You feel your authority is being undermined and your direct reports have started to challenge your decisions. You suddenly believe your boss does not trust you to run your team.

You stop functioning as an effective leader. You think, “If my manager doesn’t trust me, why should I try?” “If everything I do is being questioned, it’s easier to not do anything.” You start to lose confidence and it feels like you cannot do anything right. You feel micromanaged to the point where you are afraid to make decisions. You stop trying.

Now, look at this scenario from the boss’ perspective.

You have just taken on a new, high-profile job. You want to learn everything you can about the people and the systems you have in place. You have read *The Competent Leader* and *Master Your World*. You ask a lot of questions and you listen carefully to the answers.

The more you show interest in your direct reports and what they do, however, the more they seem to push back and resist you as their new manager. You wonder if maybe they do not like you. You wonder if they do not trust or respect you. You wonder if their loyalty to the old boss is so strong they will never accept you or the changes you want to make in their department. You wonder whether or not they are going to get onboard with your vision. You worry that, if things do not improve, you might have to let some people go. Someone once told you, “This is not truly your team unless you have personally hired everyone here.” You are starting to think that may be true.

This example involves two great workers and leaders with aligned visions and a shared work ethic. Yet, a lack of direct, honest, and timely communication among both team members leads to micro-management and a massive breakdown of trust.

Disrespecting Others’ Time

We coached one of the two top leaders at a prestigious technology company. This leader was admired by his boss, his peers, and his employees. A 360° Leadership Development Assessment indicated that literally everyone in the organization respected and genuinely liked him. This leader possessed many of the qualities of a great leader. He genuinely cared about his people, listened well, and was not afraid to make tough decisions. He scored high on our assessments.

However, there was one overarching problem that *every single person* mentioned about this particular leader. He was always late—to meetings, appointments with his team, and even when addressing his entire company!

He often kept subordinates waiting for 10, 20, or 45 minutes while he finished up with other people. The number one problem resulting from this was direct reports feeling disrespected by his broken time promises. Trust broke down because this leader consistently failed to fulfill his commitments.

This was not a rare occurrence; it happened every day. He promised to be in a certain location at a certain time, and then broke that promise. Each day that he failed to follow through on his promises, they trusted him a little less, until they finally gave up on him ever being where he was supposed to be. Not only did he inconvenience other people, but he was incredibly disrespectful of their time.

This sounds like a small issue, but his failure to meet with people or attend meetings when he said he would led to diminished trust among employees, and increased doubt about his other abilities.

Withholding Information

Some leaders we work with defend their lack of communication by saying they are too busy or that the timing is not right. With a little more time, leaders feel they will have more accurate information or their employees will be better prepared to receive the information. What these leaders fail to understand is that their efforts to try to get the right information to their people at the right time most often results in the information being delivered too late. Employees have already learned the information through their coworkers, the media, or on social media. When the information does not come directly from their manager, employees lose trust in their leaders. It appears as though the leader did not know what was going on or they did not care enough about the employees to get them the needed information in a timely manner.

I'd rather have 90% of the information now than 100% in six months.

—Lt. Gen. Harold T. Fields, U.S. Army (ret)

It is better to be transparent, providing full disclosure with what you know than to wait until you have 100 percent of the information. Chances are extremely high you will never have 100 percent of the information.

Creating uncertainty about the future

A CEO announced to the entire company, “We haven’t decided who will stay and who will be laid off yet.” This CEO went on to add, “We recently conducted evaluations and are doing extensive analysis. We’ll announce the results of our findings in two to three weeks.” The CEO’s intentions were good. She tried to convey confidence to the employees that the process they were using to determine who would stay and who would go was thorough, comprehensive, and well thought out.

The problem was that some of those employees had already been told they would be leaving. Naturally, they felt no reason not to share this information with their current co-workers. Team members felt their leadership team was lying to them ... and they were!

Information now travels faster than ever. Leaders have to make sure they stay ahead of their organization’s pipeline, and they have to get information out as quickly as possible. Leaders need to understand that not conveying information in a direct, honest, and timely manner leads to their people feeling betrayed. When managers do not communicate, team members feel their leaders do not trust them with information. As a result, they do not share information with their leaders, and trust breaks down.

Stealing

When millennials in a recent survey cited stealing as a factor that eroded trust, we were initially dumbfounded. Did they really mean stealing? Were they really referring to taking the company’s

money or property and using it for personal use? Apparently, yes! One employee shared with us how she was required to complete her manager's expense report, which included personal travel expenses that were unrelated to the business. Enough said!

Demanding Face Time

Focusing on face time instead of results by demanding that employees adhere to specific working hours is a great way to both demotivate a highly engaged employee and demonstrate you do not trust them.

For many jobs, such as those in the restaurant or retail industry, specific working hours are a necessity. But for many salaried employees, accounting for their working hours seem denigrating. We all know people who show up at work and spend several hours not really working. There is very little a manager can do to ensure that every employee is contributing 100 percent of energy and potential at all times. Highly motivated people, however, are much more focused on the work they are doing as opposed to the hours spent working. If they are excited about the work, they will work until the job is done, even if that means taking the work home or working long hours.

At one technology development firm we watched a young manager kill the motivation of his team when he decided to impose strict working hours. He wanted everyone at work, at their desks, between 9:00 and 4:30, no exceptions.

His highly motivated employees interpreted that as

- “You don't trust me, and you want to watch over my shoulder.”
- “You want to micromanage me.”
- “You don't know what I do, so you want to make sure whatever I am doing is done in the office.”
- “You don't realize that where I generate revenue is in meetings with clients, and those take place outside this office.”

Those same employees ended up leaving in disgust.

When you tell highly motivated and talented people “You must be in the office between 9:00 and 4:30,” you are telling them you don’t trust them. These employees realized the manager did not know what their roles entailed, and morale decreased even further. The attitude turned against the manager. Employees thought, “Okay, you want me to work between 9 and 4:30? Great. I will only work between 9 and 4:30. I’ll show you.”

Enforcing Rules Unethically

Hypocrisy (do as I say, not as I do) also triggers mistrust in employees. Expecting employees to adhere to all stated values and standards, but failing to adhere to those standards yourself, is guaranteed to decrease trust in both the leader and the organization.

One of the more entertaining (but oh so wrong!) examples occurred when the Army discovered soldiers were growing taller. As described in a white paper from the Army War College, Lying to Ourselves, a promotion board was looking through the evaluations of senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs). They discovered Army bosses were reporting soldiers at heights taller than they actually were to make sure that weight gains were kept within the Army’s height/weight standards.

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Employees trust leaders whose actions are consistent with what they say and how they hold themselves and others accountable. Employees believe what they see in the halls much more strongly than what they read on the walls or hear from their leaders.

Creating Unattainable Goals

Are you creating an environment in which it is virtually impossible for your people to succeed? We love a big, hairy, and audacious goal as much as the next person, and we love a good challenge. But if your goals are simply too challenging, you set your employees up for failure. Subordinates will examine what specific requirements need to be accomplished to meet the set

standards and neglect the elements that are unlikely to be inspected. Goals need to be realistic so employees do not feel a need to falsify information to make it appear as though the goals are being met. If employees cannot trust their manager to set realistic and attainable goals, why should they trust them in other facets of their jobs?

Gossiping

When managers partake in gossip, employee trust is undermined for several reasons. First, most people walk away from the conversation, wondering “If this leader talks like this about others when they’re not present, what are they saying about me when I’m not around?” Second, it communicates to others that the manager does not truly care about the people they are speaking negatively about. Employees do not trust managers who, they believe, do not care about their people.

Being Disloyal

The job of a leader is to serve and support the people who are on their team. This means that the needs of your employees and customers must come before your own. We worked with one manager who felt it was okay to publicly take sole credit for the work of his team. This manager loved the praise and recognition from others, but never passed it along or publicly recognized the great work of his team members. When managers are motivated by selfish gains and/or are primarily focused on promoting themselves, employees see right through that behavior and become mistrustful of their actions and intentions.

Breeding Mistrust

Mistrust breeds more mistrust, which results in uncertainty, disruption, blame, and anger. Enough mistrust can kill an organization. Managers who do not trust employees set up all sorts of safeguards to ensure their goals are met. For example, a manager may:

- Double- and triple-check an employee’s work on the hunt for mistakes;
- Tell an employee not only *what* needs to be done, but exactly *how* to do it;
- Require employees to bring information to them so the manager can make the decision;

- Follow up excessively to ensure the work is being done the way the manager wants it completed;
- Request to be copied on all emails sent by the employee;
- Check in frequently to pinpoint the whereabouts of the employee.

Every one of these actions communicates to the employee they are not trusted. As a result, the employee starts to believe they cannot trust their manager. Both the manager and the employee then start taking actions that confirms each other's beliefs. Not feeling trusted, the employee stops trying at work. The employee refuses to make simple decisions because he or she strongly believes the manager will find errors with the work. The employee feels criticized and mistrusted so work output declines. In turn, the manager gets frustrated with the lack of work. Both wonder, "Why should I even try?"

Prescription for Trust Success

Whether you are a new or seasoned manager, building trust with your employees and your supervisor is critical to your ability to get things done. Do you have clout at work? Do your leaders? Clout is defined as the ability to influence others to get things done. Why do some people in organizations have clout and others do not? The answer often boils down to the level of trust others have in managers and their ability to get things done.

The following are proven behaviors and actions that will help you build trust with your supervisor and your employees:

Do What You Say You are Going to Do

This suggestion offers you the fastest path to trustworthiness. Do you follow through on what you say you are going to do? If you tell someone you are going to do something, write it down so you don't forget. Put it on your calendar or track it in an app. And then, do it. If you ask someone else to do something for you, write it down so you remember to check in with them to ensure its completion. This reinforces that the tasks you delegate are important.

Go Beyond the Conventional Relationship

As a manager, you are expected to fulfill your assigned responsibilities. Completing a performance appraisal is one of those responsibilities. Passing around a birthday card for everyone in the department to sign is not one of those responsibilities, but it goes a long way towards showing that you care. When you do something extra like acknowledging an employee's special day, you go beyond the conventional relationship and earn trust in the process.

Communicate ... Communicate ... Communicate

Improving your communication is another important way to gain trust. The more openly and honestly you communicate, the more trust you will have in your relationships. The frequency of your communication with your supervisor and your employees should not be underestimated. Direct, honest, timely, and caring communication builds trust.

Keep Your Employees Informed

We all want to be "in the know." Take the time to keep your employees informed about what is happening within the organization. The more people feel informed about their organization, the better they feel about their participation in that organization. When you do not have the answer or are unsure of the reason for a particular decision, be honest with your employees and do whatever you can to get more information to them as soon as possible.

Direct, honest, timely, and caring communication builds trust.

Use a *Real* Open Door Policy

Most managers say they have an open door policy. However, employees are quick to discover that, although the door may be open, the mind is closed. If you have an open door policy, it means you welcome people to come to your office with their ideas, comments, complaints, and suggestions. It also means you are open to actively listen and honestly respond to those who come to see you.

Encourage Others to Express Contrary Viewpoints

Let people know you expect them to challenge and disagree with you. When they do, let them state their case. Do not interrupt. Look for areas of agreement and be willing to see the other's perspective. Once you have a clear understanding of their view, clarify the points that you support and those you cannot support. Provide a thorough explanation as to why you disagree. Help other people understand your perspective by speaking clearly and providing examples and illustrations to clarify your points.

Do Not Shoot the Messenger

Nothing destroys trust and credibility more than shooting the messenger. Unfortunately, this is a common problem in many organizations. A good leader understands that, in today's complex organizations, people are required to relay information. If you shoot the messenger one too many times, not only will the messenger not come back again, but everyone else will do whatever it takes to keep negative information from you.

Encourage Employees to Share Information

If your employees rely solely on you to keep them informed, you will quickly become overwhelmed, and the employees will not have all the information they need to do a quality job. Let your staff know you expect them to share information on a regular basis. Actively involve others in giving updates and sharing other relevant information.

Promptly Respond to Communication from Others

A general rule of thumb is to respond to people within 24 hours at the most. A better rule of thumb for some people would be to respond within four hours. Different people have different response expectations. When someone sends you an email, letter, or phone message, respond to that person as promptly as possible to inform them what actions you are taking in response to their email or request for information. Even if you cannot respond with a complete answer or solution right away, let them know you are working on it and will get back to them ASAP. Then, follow through on your promise.

Keep Your Manager Informed

Managers differ in the amount of information they wish to receive from the people they manage. Take the time to discover what your boss expects from you. How often does he or she expect to hear from you? Does he or she prefer written information (reports or status updates) or a weekly face-to-face meeting? What types of decisions does he or she expect to be consulted on? When can you make decisions on your own? How much detail does he or she like? If you cannot readily find the answers to these questions, set up a meeting with your boss to address these questions. Remember, no one likes surprises, and that includes your boss.

Practice the Concept of “No Surprises”

A wife once said to her husband, “If you’re going to surprise me, put it in a small jewelry box.” As this remark implies, most surprises you receive are negative.

Examples at work might include

- An employee does not solve a customer’s problem, resulting in a complaint that filters up to your level;
- Senior management changes a policy or procedure but does not inform your department of the changes;
- You believed you were receiving a promotion, only to find out someone else received the offer.

The more you eliminate negative surprises from relationships with your supervisor and your employees, the stronger the bonds of trust. One of the best ways to eliminate negative surprises is through clear and frequent communication.

Set Clear Expectations

Clear expectations are critical to building trust. The clearer you are about what you expect from others and what others can expect from you, the easier it is to build trust.

Be Honest

Everyone agrees that honesty builds trust. What we want to emphasize is the power of honesty, especially when it costs you something to be truthful. For example, if you were to go to your employees and tell them there was going to be a layoff in two months, the chances are your employees will be unhappy with you and your news. But, they will remember that you gave them all the information you had as soon as you had it. Or, suppose you witness someone unknowingly drop a \$100 bill. You call attention to the lost bill and return it to the person. It “cost” you \$100, but this person now perceives you as honest and is more inclined to trust you. We gain the most trust through honesty when that honesty actually costs us something.

Care about Your Supervisor’s and Your Employees’ Personal and Professional Success

Do you know what is important to your employees? Can you name their spouses and children? When your people need help, do they find you approachable and understanding? Do you support your boss when they have an issue?

When your actions demonstrate to your supervisor and your employees that you genuinely care about their personal and professional success, they will find it easier to trust you and the decisions you make in your leadership role.

Have Their Backs

Trust in the workplace happens when everyone feels they are free to try new ideas, encouraged to accept new and challenging projects, and, at the professional development level, are working to push themselves forward. This also means mistakes will happen. Great leaders encourage and support people to try new ideas, even when they know mistakes will result. Innovation is what drives the entire organization forward, but innovation cannot happen if people are not given the opportunity to try new things.

Employees know they are not always going to be perfect. As a leader, you want employees to have the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them. You want people who are willing to take risks in the hopes of creating new products, services, and ideas that will ultimately improve

the condition of your team or organization. It is preferable to have people try and fail than to not try at all. People can learn from failure if they use the experience to grow and gain valuable perspectives to apply to their next project. A good leader will help this process.

When people are consistently sharing ideas, project updates, successes, and failures, they learn to accept feedback, continue learning, and take action. Are you creating an environment where people are encouraged to take risks and make mistakes? Doing so demonstrates and nurtures mutual trust.

Under-Promise and Over-Deliver

We spoke with an employee who was smart and motivated, and cheerfully gave 110 percent all the time, every day, including weekends, nights, and holidays. This employee never expected any special treatment, and was the consummate team player. His boss told him he would receive a bonus for all the extra work. But the bonus was not approved. The corporate policy of providing “time off” was used instead, so the employee was told to take time off as compensation. But the work and the requirements still existed. Not only was the employee unable to take off time, he had been promised money that never arrived. He felt the organization deceived him and he quit four months later.

Do not make promises if you cannot deliver. Instead, under-promise and over-deliver.

Shoot Straight with New Hires

Organizations need to be very careful about what they promise people during the hiring process. Many organizations and excited human resources managers try to paint the rosiest picture possible of the opportunities available at the company. When the employee arrives, they are quickly disillusioned and feel subjected to a bait-and-switch. When hiring new people, be truthful. Tell them the good, the bad, and the ugly. Tell them what challenges they might face, and make sure they make a well-informed decision to come to work for your organization.

Shoot straight. The reputation of your organization will attract new employees. The reality of your organization’s culture is what will retain new employees. Don’t exaggerate benefits or dangle possible benefits that are years in the future. When the employee shows up and finds the

promised benefit, project, or promotion is several years in the future, they feel betrayed; trust is destroyed.

Get to Know Your People

We witnessed an amazing example of what great leaders do to build trust within their workforce. A new boss was joining the organization. She sent out emails letting people know she was coming, and she set up an anonymous way for employees to let her know if they felt there were important things for this new leader to know. This new leader made it clear that team members could speak to her about anything, whether it was related to personnel, work environment, office support, or career development. She wanted to know what was on people's minds and what she needed to address to build an even stronger team and more supportive work environment. She assured everyone that all comments would remain confidential and anonymous. She wanted honest feedback.

When she arrived, she asked everyone to meet with her for an orientation and asked everyone for their written goals for the year before the meeting. The more senior people thought this was a wasted exercise and complained.

When she met with everyone individually for "orientation," she did not review the goals. She informed the employees that she had used the goals to get to know people before their meeting. During the orientation, she said, "I want you to orient me. Tell me how you got here, how you came to work here, and something interesting that's going on in your life."

Everyone had expected a baseline performance evaluation. It was not a performance evaluation, and the leader did not talk about herself. The entire meeting was all about the employee. She listened the entire time, speaking only to follow up with interested questions about the employees. Every single employee walked out of their meeting feeling valued, appreciated, and listened to. It was one of the most effective techniques we have ever seen a new leader utilize. When employees feel cared for, trust for their leader comes much more easily.

Make Their Priorities YOUR Priorities

We watched an accounting firm with very talented and highly motivated people suddenly experience a decrease in morale. Some of the accountants were working on some very specialized clients' issues, which required certain processes and certain forms. The problem was, the administrative assistant who had electronic access to these forms had left, and no one knew how or where to get them.

Repeated requests to the manager went largely ignored because it simply was not the manager's priority. He had no idea how the forms were used or why they were important. The team of talented accountants was stuck. Weeks went by and the employees became frustrated and angry because they felt the boss was ignoring them and did not care about this project. One senior accountant complained to us, "I can't move forward because I don't have what I need to do my job. If my boss and this firm cared about me, they would make sure I had what I needed to do this job."

When employees feel cared for, trust for their leader comes much more easily.

Your employees' priorities must be your priorities.

If you want your people to trust you, they have to believe what they feel is important is equally important to you.

Structure Work for Individual and Team Success

Leaders need to know their people and know what tools they need in order to be successful at work. Sometimes this means more telework, flexible hours, alternative work sites, and using technology to connect instead of a time clock.

This does not mean coddling employees or making exceptions repeatedly for people who are not performing. This means understanding what is important to them, knowing what motivates them,

and treating people as individuals instead of as commodities. To build mutual trust, focus on holding people accountable for results rather than face time or hours worked.

Give People Honest, Direct, Helpful, and Immediate Feedback

One of our military examples comes from an Army general, whose temper was legendary and explosive. He was impatient, demanding, and he “did not suffer fools well,” as everyone knew. If you were wrong, he let you know immediately and, sometimes, in front of everyone else.

Loudly! He wanted information and it had to be accurate.

He sounds like an ogre, and, yet, his officers and troops loved him. Why?

“We always know exactly where we are with him,” explained one mid-level officer. “If you’re wrong, he lets you know right away. If he is mad, you know it!”

“And so does everyone else!” chimed in another officer.

When we asked if they trusted him, every single person responded with an enthusiastic yes.

“Absolutely. He is totally straight with everyone. He doesn’t care if you are another general or a colonel or a major. He is a no-BS guy with everyone.”

Another officer added, “Plus, once he explodes, it’s over. He expects you to fix the problem and not let it happen again. You screwed up and you know it, but he still lets you know that he trusts you to do your job and take care of your people.”

Great leaders know that being honest with employees, especially when things are tough, builds trust. Great leaders trust their people and give them the opportunities to live up to expectations.

Don’t Waste Your One Chance

You only get one chance, and that applies to businesses, too. Whether it is a fast food restaurant or your local barber, the first experience with their product or service generally determines your lifelong impression of that company. Some employees will only give you one chance before deciding whether or not they trust you.

Great leaders trust their people and give them the opportunities to live up to expectations.

Building trust takes time. If you do what you say you're going to do, do more than is expected, openly communicate often, practice the concept of "no surprises," practice honesty even when it costs you something, and really care about an individual's personal and professional success, you will find it easier to build relationships based on trust.

For Mary's articles on leadership, visit <http://productiveleaders.com/why-leaders-fail-free-leadership-articles/>.

For Peter's articles on leadership, visit <https://www.PeterStark.com/blog/>.

It can take weeks, months, and even years to build trust, but mere minutes to destroy it.

Gaining and retaining the trust of a team is one of the most difficult things a leader can do. It can take weeks, months, and even years to build trust, but mere minutes to destroy it.

7 Tips for Building Trust

1. Give employees as much information as you can, both good and bad.
2. Respecting others means respecting their time.
3. Know that information travels fast so get ahead of the problem.
4. Spend time with your people and listen to what is important to them.
5. Make your people's priorities YOUR priorities.
6. Under-promise and over-deliver to your employees.
7. Structure your team's work to best enable their success.

End Notes

Chapter Two

[1] Peter Barron Stark Companies has two benchmarks for organizations to compare their survey results against. The Best-of-the-Best Benchmark includes the top quarter of organizations surveyed, while the Overall Benchmark includes all companies surveyed. Learn more about our benchmarks at <http://bit.ly/1RT3WQd>

Other books by Peter Stark and Mary Kelly

The Competent Leader by Peter B. Stark and Jane S. Flaherty

The Only Negotiating Guide You'll Ever Need: 101 Ways to Win Every Time in Any Situation
by Peter B. Stark and Jane S. Flaherty

The Manager's Pocket Guide to Leadership Skills (Manager's Pocket Guide Series) by Peter B. Stark and Jane S. Flaherty

Master Your World: 10 Dog-Inspired Leadership Lessons to Improve Productivity, Profits and Communication by Mary C. Kelly

15 Ways to Grow Your Business in Every Economy by Mary C. Kelly

Money Smart: How Not to Buy Cat Food When You Don't Have a Cat by Mary C. Kelly

Checklist for Starting a Successful Business by Mary C. Kelly