# 7 Steps to Create an Environment of Trust on Your Teams

**FranklinCovey**

# Leaders should move from Command and Control to Trust and Inspire.

The majority of leaders today still operate from a "Command and Control" leadership style. This leadership style focuses on efficiency and getting things done. They view their employees as fragmented people (just an employee) versus a whole person (body, heart, mind, and spirit). It's about self-interest and competing, rather than serving and caring. It's about motivating, rather than inspiring, and controlling instead of unleashing potential.

But in the new world of work, this leadership style is outdated. The game is changing and it's not enough anymore to just motivate. We must adapt to what is more timely and relevant—a "Trust & Inspire" leadership model.

A "Trust & Inspire" leader knows that building trust with their employees is absolutely essential to the success of their team and the organization, but knowing where to start can be difficult. **The best way to build trust is to model it. It starts from the inside out; a leader's job is to go first.**

Whether you've already created an environment of strong trust in your organization, or your teams sputters with suspicion—it depends on your leaders. Implement these seven steps to create conditions in which trust can flourish in your organization.

# **1.** Start by modeling trust yourself.

FACT:

**It's more than what you say—your direct reports follow what you do.**

## Leaders set the tone for their teams.

Brush up on the 13 Behaviors® of High-Trust Leaders from FranklinCovey's *Leading at the Speed of Trust*—in particular, these three:

- **Keep commitments.** Meet deadlines when you tell your team you'll do something. Don't skip recurring 1-on-1s, even when you feel too busy. When emergencies happen and you cannot keep a commitment, explain why—and if you routinely lapse, be more realistic about what you promise.

- **Speak in an open, honest way**. Give your true perspective without inflating the good or the bad, or holding back information (unless it's truly confidential). Do this consistently and your team will trust that what you say is really what you think.

- **Share your relevant failures.** Sharing your failures while emphasizing what you learned from them signals that the important thing is to try your best, to learn, and to improve. If all you do is push for perfection, your team may hold back or make excuses when things don't go well. Direct reports who aren't afraid to make mistakes feel more confident taking risks and owning their work.

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Extending trust is the ultimate act of leadership, the defining skill that transforms a manager into a leader."

—Stephen M. R. Covey,
New York Times and #1 Wall Street Journal bestselling author, co-founder of CoveyLink, and the FranklinCovey Global Speed of Trust Practice Leader

# 2. Eliminate rules or processes that send the signal "We don't trust you."

PRO TIP:

**When you can, eliminate unnecessary restrictions, and tell your direct reports that you trust them to do their jobs well and do what's right for your customers and your company.**

## Some rules and processes are necessary.

Whether for legal compliance reasons or to ensure essential work gets done right, most employees understand when rules and processes are required (You wouldn't want a pilot to skip their preflight checklist).

But when direct reports experience these practices as tools that monitor them or that restrict their ability to do their jobs well, they can feel management doesn't trust them. And when people don't feel trusted, they may respond by taking less responsibility for what they do—the opposite of what you need from them.

**Common trust-eroding practices:**

- Remote worker attendance check-ins (e.g., requiring remote workers to message when they start work)

- Keys or passwords to access supplies, digital files, or other resources

- Software that monitors "activity"

- Cameras on for every virtual meeting

- Regulating when and for how long people take breaks

- Requiring an expense report for every purchase, no matter how small

- Approvals for small decisions (e.g., giving customers a reasonable discount or refund)

For things you don't have the power to change, such as organization-wide computer monitoring software, you could share feedback with your manager (e.g., *"This practice is hurting trust on my team because people feel micromanaged. Could we discuss the impact and the possibility of revising this policy?"*). Honestly communicate to your team any benefits of the policy (e.g., *"IT is using app-usage data to make software purchasing decisions."*) and reassure your direct reports that you trust them.

# **3.** Set up transparent communication protocols to keep team members in the know.

When you set a standard with your team that transparency helps everyone, trust flows in all directions.

FACT:

**Sharing information freely helps direct reports feel more accountable to deliver on their commitments (less likely to let each other down) and feel confident that they have the information they need to make good decisions.**

Here are some ways you can model this as a leader and help your team share what they know:

- **Create a public venue for progress updates and goal tracking.** Choose a cadence and venue (e.g., a standup meeting, an update email or chat post, or a data dashboard) that works best for your team. Be specific about what people should share—not only tasks they've completed or progress they've made but also challenges they're facing or needs they have. That allows team members to ask questions and offer support.

- **Dedicate times and channels to share organizational news and strategies.** Add "Share news" as a recurring agenda item for team meetings and 1-on-1s. And designate a place— perhaps a shared chat channel—where people can post their news to each other. Be sure to share leaders' current thinking as well as their final decisions to help your team understand how their work fits into the organization's larger goals and prepare for possible changes.

- **Build a habit of asking yourself and others, *"Who else should know about this?"*** Doing so builds trust by ensuring that people have all the information they need to do their jobs. It also encourages your team to think about what others need and to share information proactively, rather than keeping it to themselves or waiting for people to ask.

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The ability to make a contribution gets people excited and makes them feel confident. If you want to inspire a team to play hard and win big, keep them informed. Clearly communicate how each person's role contributes to the whole."

—Suzette Blakemore,
Vice President of Sales, FranklinCovey

# 4. Encourage direct reports to speak up—and always respond constructively when they do.

Your direct reports may hold back their ideas and concerns when they fear that their views will be rejected or held against them.

But when you actively welcome their input and concerns, they feel safer sharing their best thinking and effort—and feel more invested in contributing to the team.

**To encourage people to say what they think:**

- **Share why it's important for people to speak up**. *"I'm excited to lead this project, but I certainly don't have all the answers. It's going to take everyone's best ideas for us to get a final product that we're all proud of."*

- **Ask for input**. *"I'm thinking we should do X, but before I decide, what am I missing? I want to hear any concerns that I should take into consideration."*

**To respond positively and constructively regardless of what they share:**

- **If an idea is on target, reinforce it.** *"Thank you, that's a great point. Let's include that in our new protocol."*

- **If an idea is off-target, show gratitude for their effort and gently redirect the discussion.** *"Thanks for that idea. I appreciate what you're saying. Right now we need to keep our focus on X. Your idea could be worth revisiting later when we shift to Y."*

- **If they flag a mistake or potential mistake, acknowledge their concern.** *"Thank you so much for speaking up! You're right."* Or *"Thank you for raising that. It turns out, the way we're doing it is correct. But I'm glad you spoke up because it's important that we're all on the lookout for possible problems."*

- **If they raise a contrary view, be sure it's fully considered.** *"That is quite different from what I'm hearing, so thank you for sharing it. Can you elaborate on why you think the original idea won't work?"*

# 5. Help direct reports collaborate in ways that rely on and develop each other's strengths.

You're the boss, so your direct reports will naturally come to you for feedback and guidance.

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CONSIDER THIS:

**What other team activities or discussions can you facilitate to encourage better collaboration?**

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But if they rely only on you, their work can go only as far as your expertise can take them. When team members work together, they learn to use each other's knowledge and ideas—and to rely on one another.

As their leader, it's your job to go first. When your employees see you model the behaviors below they will follow your lead and be more open to working with others.

**To lay the groundwork for greater collaboration:**

- **Talk as a team about each person's greatest strengths**. When your direct reports understand each other's strengths, they'll be better able to utilize them. You might share in a team meeting what you see as each direct report's strengths. Or, if your team already has a good foundation of trust, you might facilitate a team discussion that leaves room for the group to identify skills you haven't thought of.

- **Suggest that team members seek each other's input for problem-solving and planning.** For example, *"Braeden probably has some good ideas to help you because he faced a similar problem last year"*. Or *"Since Juan is doing related work, you might consider getting his insights as you develop your plan. How about checking in with him to see if it makes sense to collaborate?"*

- **When making assignments, encourage fresh partnerships that help teammates grow.** Frame collaborations in a way that team members see how everyone benefits. For example, *"Chanti, how about working with Drew on your next project? Your expertise in product design would help him expand his knowledge, and his project management skills could help you track the details."*

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Teams realize exponential results when individuals' talents and passions perfectly collide with their roles."

—Scott Miller,
Senior Advisor, Thought Leadership
FranklinCovey

# **6.** Regularly highlight how each direct report's efforts contribute to achieving team goals.

Individual recognition is a powerful way to inspire your direct reports by showing them that you appreciate their hard work.

FACT:

**When you tie individual efforts to the team's successes, you build trust among teammates by showing how each person is pulling their weight and working toward shared goals.**

It's not easy to tap into something that lights a person up and inspires them intrinsically. It's far easier to extrinsically motivate a person with 'the carrot or the stick.'

In reality, motivation isn't bad. In fact, it can be good, but it has its limits. The best of what you need from your team members is only attainable beyond where motivation will get you.

Inspiration comes from helping people find their inner drive. As a leader, you can inspire others to feel a sense of purpose and excitement by recognizing their accomplishments and showing them how their work connects to the bigger picture.

Make a point to call out an individual's great efforts to the rest of the team.

Depending on the nature of your team's work, you could specify the part each person played in a large project or how their work helped the team tackle its top priorities as you consistently highlight everyone's contribution your team members will model this behavior and give others on the team credit as well.

**For example:**

*"Congratulations to everyone who worked on the restructuring project—RJ for designing the new system, Patty for the database update, and Stanton for testing (and bringing the doughnuts). And while most of us were rushing to finish, Samantha expertly handled a crisis with our most important client so that we could stay focused on the restructuring project. It was a great example of how we support one another to get the job done. Thank you."*

# **7.** Use feedback to reinforce high-trust behaviors—and redirect trust-damaging ones.

PRO TIP:

**Try to give feedback when the behavior is fresh in the person's mind, and give more reinforcing feedback than redirecting feedback.**

## What you say and do matters.

**Reinforce these high-trust behaviors in your direct reports:**

- Hearing others out during disagreements
- Admitting mistakes
- Speaking up about an issue (e.g., with you or a teammate) rather than letting it slide
- Offering help and following up about it
- Giving credit to others when it's due
- Freely sharing information that benefits others on the team

Package your feedback by explaining the behavior you noticed and its impact—followed by your request for more of the behavior. For example:

*"I noticed that you offered to help with the overflow requests without being asked. That attitude shows that others can depend on you and sets a great example for the team. Please continue to step up where you see opportunities to help."*

**Redirect these trust-damaging behaviors in your direct reports:**

- Hoarding useful information
- Overpromising and underdelivering
- Covering up mistakes
- Blaming others
- Taking credit for other people's work
- Micromanaging others' contributions

To redirect behaviors like these, consider having the conversation in private. Explain the behavior you noticed and its impact. Listen to the person's perspective and respond appropriately. For example, you might start the conversation by saying:

*"I noticed in this week's updates that you haven't yet sent the report to Kristin, even though you said you would by Tuesday. Lapsed commitments like that don't just slow down our team, they hurt trust. Could you help me understand what's going on?"*

# Your job as a leader is to go first.

> **"It takes a lot of courage, humility, and self-awareness to look at ourselves closely and with honesty."**
>
> —Todd Davis,
> Chief People Officer, FranklinCovey

When building trust on your team, you must be willing to constantly self-evaluate your behaviors and then take action.

Become a "Trust & Inspire" leader and start implementing these 7 steps to build trust within your team today. To learn more about building trust, inspiring individuals in your organization, and developing your leaders, visit franklincovey.com.sg.

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