

## **TITLE: When the Team Does Not Trust Management**

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### **Is Trust Necessary?**

Have you built a relationship bond with your clients? Is it based on trust? Is it important to you for your clients to trust you? Over the years, the veterinary profession has discussed the issue of trust and your clients – how trust can help the client-doctor relationship, and how trust allows you to practice good medicine. Since being considered a trustworthy professional in the eyes of client is so important, have you ever considered how trustworthy you appear in the eyes of your team members?

According to a 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer survey, 1 in 3 employees do not trust their employers<sup>1</sup>. The American Psychological Association found that at least half of all workers do not believe their employer is open and upfront with them<sup>2</sup>. If almost half of your clients did not trust you would you jump to action? What if you had team members who did not trust you or your management team – would you still jump to action?

Lack of trust has far-reaching effects. With your clients, they do not follow your recommendations, some resort to Dr. Google, and others post messages on social media about their lack of trust. Similar to clients, a lack of trust within your team also has far-reaching effects, namely, a lack of employee engagement that will affect client service, team performance, and business financial success.

How does lack of trust affect the business? Lack of trust in the team breeds skepticism<sup>1</sup>. Team members do not feel connected to business strategy, there is a feeling that the work culture is toxic, people do not go above and beyond their jobs to reach higher performance levels, there is poor client service, poor communication, and declining profits. Yes, the bottom line is affected by a lack of trust in the leadership of the practice. Trust building in the team is just as important as trust building with your clients.

### **Trust Busters**

Since trust of leadership by your team members is so important, how do you identify trust issues in your practice? The following problems are directly linked to the breakdown in trust<sup>3,4</sup>.

- Inconsistent Messages – messages from owners & managers do not match, fail to tell the truth (either deliberate or not), not walking the talk, fail to do what you say you are going to do
- Inconsistent Standards – playing favorites, bending the rules, random or haphazard changes
- Misplaced Benevolence – not holding others accountable, ignoring bad behavior or incompetence
- False Feedback – ignoring performance shortcomings
- Failure to Trust Others – comments about not trusting a team member, micromanaging, not respecting others
- Not Keeping Commitments - promises made for training and career advancement and then broken by not acting on them
- Elephants in the Room – pretending that some situations do not exist, easier to ignore than deal with them
- Rumors – the less you say, the more likely you are to be misinterpreted
- Lack of Availability – owners or managers who never have time to meet with team members, claim you are too busy to talk about team members' questions or concerns
- Take Credit for the Work of Others – failure to acknowledge the hard work of others, not giving credit to someone else for their contribution
- Not Keep Confidences – lacking integrity, gossiping, hallway conversations
- Micromanage – excessive control over everything, not trusting others to do their jobs

Many of these trust busters are tied to management practices, change management, and transparency. However, it is easy to get fall victim to one of the trust busters when involved in challenging management duties, challenging dilemmas, and business operations. Think back to a time when your team was receiving mixed messages about an associate doctor leaving, or the time when a discussion on poor performance such as arriving late to work, was dropped because the person was highly skilled. It is very easy to get trapped in a trust buster situation.

### **Trust Builders**

Now that you know what destroys trust, take the extra effort to work on building trust within the organization. The following list is trust builders<sup>5,6</sup>.

- Listen & Act – create an organization that listens and acts upon employee concerns
- To Earn Trust You Have to Give Trust – trust is a 2-way street
- Communicate Values & Safety – employees want to see that they are treated fairly without unpredictable behavior
- Recognize Accomplishments – demonstrate social praise of others, celebrate accomplishments
- Celebrate Mistakes – learning experiences, safe to make a mistake & discuss the issues through mutual feedback
- Share Information – conduct stay interviews, utilize Open Book Management techniques
- Respect Others – develop relationships, solicit opinions, follow through with commitments
- Invest in Professional Development – develop and grow your employees, set challenging goals
- Walk the Talk – lead by example

Trust in an organization needs to be part of the strategic plan, a mission-critical issue for promoting and sustaining business success. Being a high-trust organization will benefit all areas of your Circle Care – from patient care, client service, and team performance, to business success.

Trust is the glue that holds teams together. Trust is a critical component for a high-performance team. It takes time to build trust. Train your supervisors and managers on the Trust Busters and the Trust Builders, but do not stop there, train the rest of the team as well. Trust is not just for the management team, it is for everyone in the veterinary practice.

### **References and Resources**

<sup>1</sup> Meinert, D. Why Employees Don't Trust Their Leaders. SHRM.org. June 1, 2016. Available at <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0616/pages/0616-trust-in-leaders.aspx>

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<sup>3</sup> Galford, R. and Drapeau, A. The Enemies of Trust. Harvard Business Review. February, 2003. Available at <https://hbr.org/2003/02/the-enemies-of-trust>

<sup>4</sup> Conley, Randy. The Top 10 Ways Leaders Erode Trust. Blanchard Leader Chat.org. July 30, 2015. Available at <https://leaderchat.org/2015/07/30/the-top-10-ways-leaders-erode-trust/>

<sup>5</sup> Nowack, K. and Zak, P. Brain Trust. Talent Economy. Winter 2017. Pp 28-33.

<sup>6</sup> Gilboa, D. Here's What Happens When Employees Don't Trust Their Managers. Fortune. Com. October 7, 2015. Available at <http://fortune.com/2015/10/07/employees-dont-trust-managers/>