

Trust Assessment

How do you know people trust you? Did they tell you? Chances are it's not something that comes up in regular conversation. Yet trust in a leader is one of THE top benchmarks of a leader's power and influence.

Here's a quick trust assessment – and three powerful tips in case your scores aren't quite where you want them to be.

Trust Assessment

Indicate your personal score using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely low and 10 is extremely high.

- ___ Others would say that my words and actions are consistent.
- ___ I am truthful when I share information with my staff.
- ___ I listen to staff regularly to find out their viewpoints.
- ___ After any meeting, I could share what others felt was important.
- ___ I am certain my staff understands the important information that they need to know about our organizational goals.
- ___ Nearly everyone I work with trusts me to a high level.

Add up the numbers from your 6 responses to determine your total score, and then review the rating to identify your communication score:

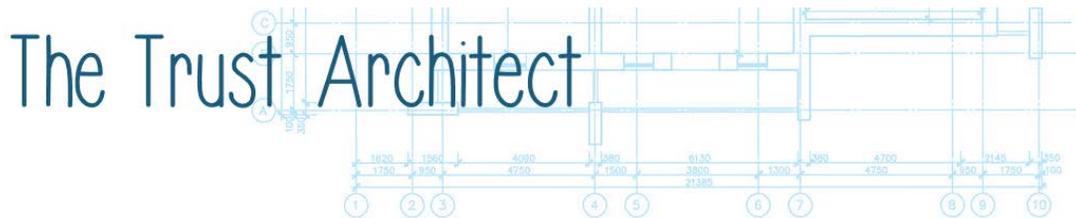
- 50 – 60 – Trusted Communicator
- 40 – 59 – Effective Communicator
- 20 – 39 – Good Intentions
- 06 – 19 – Time to Revamp

Ready to Earn More Trust?

"What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson-

Followers watch to see if a leader's words match what he says. If what he says is, "I trust you," but what he does is micromanage and hover to make sure things



are done his way, what people hear is, "I don't trust you." ASLTW (Actions speak louder than words.)

Imagine asking your staff: "Are there tasks or decisions that are made up the chain – that you can take care yourselves?" And then imagine giving them the authority to do so. What would it tell them? It may mean they fail, but a great leader allows their followers to fail and supports them to learn from their mistakes. If you allow them to fail and learn from the start, they fall a millimeter and not a mile.

To do so, you need to make communication safe. Try these three tips:

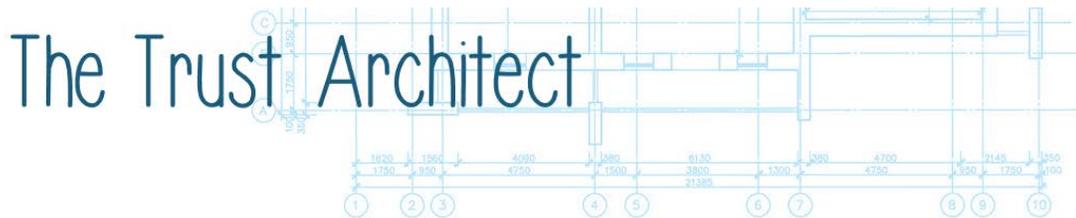
1. Tell why you can't tell

Employees should be given as much information as possible on what is happening in the company. Yet there are many times when a leader has to manage what he says and even that needs to be communicated. The best leaders share what they can when they can and also explain why they can't.

When I was interviewing Harry Herington from NIC, he told me about a townhall meeting where he was asked a question about an investment. Harry said that before he answered, he wanted the audience to carefully consider whether or not they wanted to be told - because once they had that information it would affect what they would be allowed to do with their investments (since they'd now have insider information). He was ready, willing and able to answer, but they withdrew the question. How many leaders would have said, "I can't tell you that," without an explanation? Not surprisingly, Herington is known as a High Trust Leader.

2. Respond even if you disagree

I've always been someone who seeks feedback. But I don't always take the advice and I haven't always been good at getting back to people about why. Sometimes I wasn't able to afford to implement their great ideas. It would have been better if I told them that. Instead, the message that I sent was, "I don't trust or like the quality of your input." Learn from my mistake. Share why you chose not to follow advice, whatever the reason.



3. Check the telephone game

Communication is two ways. Unless people understand what you are telling them, you are the proverbial tree in the forest. Ask yourself, "Could they explain to others what I just told them?"

Remember the 'telephone game' we used to play as children? It had us whispering something in the ear of the child next to us. They in turn had to whisper it in the ear of the child next to them, and so on and so on until it had gone around the room of the 30+ in the class. The last child had to stand up and say what they had heard. It showed us how even simple messages could get twisted around. Become such a great communicator that the message is the same in the first ear and the last.

The Bottom Line

Communication is an essential skill for trusted leaders. You have to communicate that you care by listening and talking to your staff. Be consistent in your message, committed to communicate not once, but until there is understanding and competence in how you word the message.

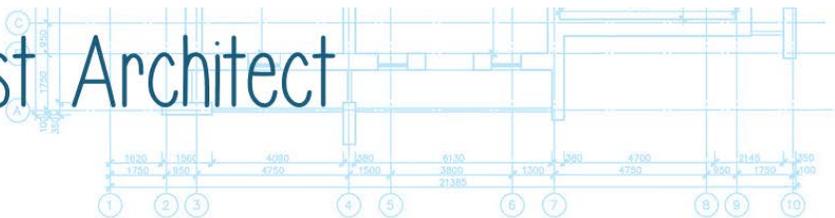
I read a great quote by Ralph Beslin of Beslin Communications Inc.:

"Communications can't make a person trust someone who is basically untrustworthy. But it can help create a culture in which trust can thrive."

Before you start communicating, take a moment to figure out what you want to say, and why. Don't waste your time conveying information that isn't necessary – and don't waste the listener or reader's time either. Too often, people just keep talking or keep writing – because they think that by saying more, they'll surely cover all the points. Often, however, all they do is confuse the people they're talking to.

To [plan your communication](#) :

The Trust Architect

The image shows a technical architectural drawing of a building facade. It features a grid of vertical lines numbered 1 through 10. Various dimensions are indicated with arrows and numbers, such as 1820, 1750, 1560, 350, 4080, 4750, 1380, 1500, 6130, 3825, 21385, 1300, 380, 4700, 4750, 350, 2145, 1750, 350, and 100. The drawing is rendered in a light blue color.

- Understand your objective. Why are you communicating?
- Understand your audience. With whom are you communicating? What do they need to know?
- Plan what you want to say, and how you'll send the message.
- Seek feedback on how well your message was received.

When you do this, you'll be able to craft a message that will be received positively by your audience.

Good communicators use the **KISS** + ("Keep It Simple and Straightforward") principle. They know that less is often more, and that good communication should be efficient as well as effective.