

# Trust as a Style



*An individual manager can build trust despite outside influences or internal conditions.*

**C**AN A SINGLE EXECUTIVE make a difference in a place where uncertainty is high and morale and trust are low? Absolutely. True, many forces that diminish trust are beyond the control of an executive. Industry upheaval, corporate mergers, tension, global competition, and other influences foster skepticism. Internally, changes in key management positions, sensitive labor negotiations, contradictory directives and policies, high turnover, lack of clear direction, or empire-building can also produce mistrust.

For those whose success depends on the performance of others, erosion of trust is a serious problem. Without trust, there can be no teamwork, collaboration, synergy, or optimal performance.

Every leader and manager needs to understand and utilize the actions and behaviors that build trust.

## Trust and Leadership Style

Mistrust can be overcome by using an effective style of leadership. We created a leadership model to establish a standard and ideal for trust-building behavior.

The model consists of four quadrants—each characterizing a different leadership style. The model describes leadership behavior, not people or personalities. While people tend to behave the same way most of the time (their primary behavior), no one ever behaves in just one of these four ways. A model can help us forecast the behavior a person may exhibit in the future.

The Q1 leadership style, for example, combines dominant and hostile behavior. Such behavior tends to be controlling, domineering, and insensitive. This is not a style that engenders

trust because the manager primarily acts out of self-interest. Q1 behavior has no regard for building relationships, interdependence, or teamwork. Q1 leadership may get results, but only in sporadic flashes of optimum performance stimulated by the erratic fluctuations of the negative tension it generates.

Eliminating risk seems to be the goal of Q2 leadership. The trust-busting Q2 behavior is shown when a manager is cautious, noncommittal, and secretive. This reflects the attempt to do everything possible to minimize vulnerability. When it comes to trust, you can't get what you won't give, and Q2 trusts almost no one.

The Dimensional Model of Behavior



With a blend of submission and warmth, Q3 behavior strives to please others. People exhibiting Q3 behavior are highly sociable, talkative, and overly agreeable. The problem is, you never know where you stand with Q3 leadership. Their fondness for everything—for applauding every suggestion, for producing decisions that are popular, for offering explanations that are favorable—makes Q3 leadership unreliable.

Only the Q4 leadership style can inspire trust. This leader is candid, collaborative, and analytical. Q4 accepts the risk of trusting others. This leader encourages both empowerment and collaboration. The leader personally demonstrates trust in each direct report, while encouraging people to trust one another.

## Where to Begin

Some Q4 skills take time to master; however, any leader can do five things immediately to build trust.

**1. Walk the talk.** Any gap between your intentions and your behavior will undermine trust. You build trust daily by being constructively candid. Say what's on your mind, without blame, editing, or censoring. Demonstrate the values and principles you advocate.

**2. Treat others with respect.** Don't score points at the other person's expense. It is difficult to collaborate when being disparaged. The use of sarcasm, condescension, or malicious remarks lowers receptivity and destroys trust.

**3. Create a problem-solving climate.** Q1 leadership often makes demands before there is any agreement on what the problem is. In contrast, Q4 interaction clearly defines the problem and resolves the problem by finding out why it exists, and then figuring out how to solve it.

**4. Discuss facts, not personalities.** When offering feedback to an employee, stay focused on objective facts. It is unwise to attribute motives to someone else's actions: "You just want to be a big shot." Such diagnostic statements usually strike the other person as unfair, and unfair treatment does not generate trust.

**5. Make discussions win-win situations.** Don't let a spirited, lively debate become a quarrel. Name-calling, insults, and outbursts of temper are trademarks of the verbal quarrel. These differ greatly from Q4 debates in which both parties explore alternatives, find flaws in each, and try to settle on the best option. Verbal quarrels are ego-oriented, where victory, not assistance, is what counts. It is difficult to trust people who are intent on defeating, rather than helping, you.

We associate four characteristics with building trust: integrity, consistency, reliability, and interdependence. Q4 leaders exhibit all four. They display integrity by communicating without pretense, criticizing and praising with constructive candor. They show reliability and consistency by setting rules that they, too, live by. They promote interdependence by involving others in decisions, letting others see who they are, and making the effort to know others. Q4 leaders achieve objectives, increase productivity, experience personal satisfaction, and make a difference. That is the power of trust. **EE**

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*Excellence in Action: Cultivate a Q4 style of leadership in your life and organization.*