Welcome To Trust

Trust: Autobahn, Germany

In this episode of Leadership University we're going to explore:

- Renewed definition of trust which identifies five key components:
  - Connection Through Understanding
  - Motives
  - Abilities
  - Character
  - Track Record
- Connectedness to your team by actively listening and incorporating their feedback
- Development of new strategies (from conversations with a mentor, their team and their own reflection) to deepen trust, and thus increase efficiency in your team

Timeline

Your work in this chapter will take approximately three cumulative hours to complete. Plan to spend about 1.5 hours watching the videos and completing the online activities. You will be asked to conduct 4, 15-minute in-person meetings with one or two stakeholders of your choosing, and then you'll summarize their feedback online. These conversations can be part of regularly scheduled, one-on-one meetings. You will also be asked to speak with a mentor for 20 minutes.

"Trust is like a wall. It is built one brick at a time, but when it breaks, it comes down all at once. It has to be rebuilt brick by brick."
- Dr. Henry Cloud

Video: Establishing Trust

What Is Trust?

Trust can be defined as a confident expectation. In the same way that we invest in the stock market when we feel confident that we'll see a positive return, so it goes with trust in relationships. We invest ourselves, our time, our energy, our resources, our talents, and so forth when we're confident that doing so will lead to good outcomes. Trust fuels investment—of money, time, energy, and self. Think of a time in your life when you were part of a working team built on trust. What were you able to accomplish? How did it feel? If you've never been part of a trustworthy team, reflect how that has felt throughout your career.

Trust Is An Understanding Of Needs

The highest-performing teams share a deep understanding of each person's individual needs as well as a shared understanding of what the group is dealing with and what it needs from each member to succeed. Similarly, the highest-performing companies are those whose customers feel that the company really understands their needs and meets them.

Trust Makes Everything Work

As trust goes up in a team, efficiency increases and costs go down. We don't waste emotion or money. When we trust, we can move forward because we know the person has our best interest at heart. We are not suspicious of their intent. Think about a recent project that you completed with your team. How did trust factor into its outcome?

Video: Investment

Trust On A Team Starts With Leadership

As leaders, we often try to save face, to make it seem like we have it all together. It can seem easier to deflect blame, to retreat, to push problems to the back burner. Truly great leaders acknowledge their mistakes and engage their team in righting wrongs.

Trusting Your Team

Rank the current level of trust you have for your team 1-5, with 5 representing complete trustworthiness.

Your Team's Trust In You

Rank the current level of trust you think your team holds for you 1-5, 5 representing complete trustworthiness.

Past Relationships Inform The Ability to Trust

Certain people will trust until it's broken, some people come with inherent trust for others. Some people trust easily, others make you work for it.

Are you someone who trusts easily?

Acknowledging Your Issues With Trust

Whether you trust others easily or not, how has this outlook shaped your work with your team?

Your Team's Trust in You

Do members of your team seem eager to trust you right away or have they made you earn it? How?

Your Trustworthy Behavior

Think about the last month of work with your team. Can your team rely on you to:

...say what you mean?
...to make plans and follow through with them?
...hold yourself accountable?
...maintain confidentiality?

List some ways that your team has seen you behave in trustworthy way. List some ways you might have fallen short.

Building Trust

We can all work to improve the level of trust on our teams. As a leader, building trust should be one of the highest priorities. You set the example for how your team functions and relates to each other. Their performance is directly tied to their trust in you. People often come to a working environment filled with skepticism about a leader's motivation. They have been burned before and worry that this time may be no different. How can you demonstrate that you're a trustworthy leader? We'll soon find out.

Video: Connecting

Connection Through Understanding

Connection builds on understanding. Trust grows when we feel understood.

Addressing Needs

Once at a restaurant, I ordered some soup. When I tasted it, it was barely at room temperature. I love soup. But, I hate it cold. I called the server over and said, "Excuse me, but my soup is cold." Immediately, he said, "That's horrible. You didn't come all this way to have cold soup. That's the worst. Here, let me get you some more." I loved it. He understood. I remember thinking, "I'll be back." I had not even eaten the soup yet, but I felt as if someone was on my team.

Addressing Needs

But what if the server had said, "It looks fine to me, It should be OK. I tasted it a little while ago. But, if you don't want it, I'll get you something else." There is a disconnect here and it is not the same. I wouldn't sense his heart. The one who understands is the one who wins a customer who will not only choose to come back, but actually wants to.

Trust Through Accountability

Think about a time when a person made a mistake and you had to point it out, but when you did, he/she owned up to it and validated your emotions. It could be a boss, a parent, a customer service representative, anyone. Describe the incident. How did their response to your concerns make you feel about the mistake? About that person?

Understanding The Other

The first requirement to build trust is to connect through understanding the other person. Remember, people do not trust us when we understand them. They trust us when they understand that we understand them. What that means is not "that we get it." What it means is that "they get it that we get it."

For that to happen, we have to listen and understand where they are really coming from, and truly connect with them, showing them that we understand. So that they know they have been connected with. That takes time and attention. They need to feel it.

That requires that we provide a space to get know them, make it safe enough for them to be vulnerable, and show us what things are really like for them. In a team, that means that there is time and attention given to understanding each person, their function, what drives it, what makes it difficult, and so forth.

The Character That Builds Trust

If nice is not enough, and heartfelt connection is what matters, how is that established? What does that kind of character actually do that wins the hearts of other people and creates successful work and personal scenarios? The answer is empathy.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to enter into another person's experience and connect with it in such a way that you actually experience, to some degree, what the other person is experiencing. It is "as if" you are that other person, at least for a moment. Empathy comes from the Greek words meaning "in" and "feeling." It is as if you are "in the feeling" of the other.

Describe two recent examples of empathic behavior you've demonstrated to your team.

Circle Of Empathy

Unity forms around mutual care based in empathy. But it comes from getting out of your own experience and into the experience of what it is like to be the other person, and then completing the loop by letting them know that you have heard it.

It happens like this:

They talk → you experience them → you share what you have heard and experienced about their experience → then they experience you as having heard them. They then know you are "with them."

Seeking Validation

If entering into another person's reality, validating it, and treating it with respect builds connection, what destroys it? The exact opposite: invalidation. Invalidation occurs when a person's experience is all that exists to him or her. And he or she then moves to negate the other person's experience, treating it as somehow not real or nonexistent.

Think about a time when you tried to resolve a problem in your working life, and decided to come to a boss for help. Did that person listen to you? Give you real feedback and actionable solutions? Or did they negate or minimize your experience?

Addressing Your Needs

How did that experience make you feel toward that boss? Do you feel like your level of trust for him/her increased or decreased after the encounter? Why?

Validating A Person's Feelings Doesn't Mean Agreeing With Them

Communication is often about persuasion and bringing one person around to a different perspective. To empathize and validate what someone is experiencing does not mean that you always agree or even think that the other person is right. It just means that you see it as valid in that it is really their experience, and true for that person, and you show them that you understand what they are thinking and feeling. Two people at the same meeting may have two totally different impressions about a presentation's tone, but both of their points of view should be seen by each other as valid.

And that comes from seeing and caring about another person's heart, and communicating that, whether or not you agree. You must connect first.

Exploring Trust

Think of a member of your team. How well do you feel like you understand him/her?

Their Needs

What do you think he/she need from you as leader?

Conversations For Understanding

Plan to have a 15-minute conversation with that team member. This can be part of a regular one-on-one meeting with that person. Please take a minute to write down the following questions.

What are some of the challenges you're trying to overcome in your work? Are these problems/challenges happening repeatedly? If so, how often and why? Do you feel like you can come to me with these issues directly? How can I help you address these challenges?

Interview Protocol

Tell him or her that you are enrolled in Leadership University and you're working to understand the needs of your team. Please ask for complete honesty. Be sure to summarize back to them what he/she said, so that he/she knows you understood it. Tell them that you're really trying to learn and will get back to them with some ideas on how to address the issues they have raised. Notice their body language and facial expression as they talk. Ask the questions from the list you wrote.

Interview Review

Summarize the challenges he/she is facing.

Your Feelings

How did you feel as that person was speaking?

Body Language

What kind of body language were they presenting at the beginning of the meeting? At the end?

Awareness

Were you aware of the issues the person raised? If so, how have you tried to address it before? If not, why do you think you were unaware?

Addressing Trust

Reflect on ways to address those issues.

Rebuilding Trust

If you feel that trust may have been broken with this person, perhaps your conversation is also bringing up your own feelings of mistrust for this stakeholder. Consider the following strategies in rebuilding trust on both sides: Ask yourself, "Is there anything in my actions or attitudes that have caused the problem, and can I change those?" Deal with your personal feelings of hurt and anger internally, so that your communication will be more fair and open, more likely to help rather than hurt or extend the problem.

Find the best way to communicate that you see your own role in the problem. Apologize if necessary. Confront if necessary. Address the situation directly.

Do more listening than talking, and really try to understand the other person.

Go with a sincere plan to make things right.

Get feedback from that person and others on what kind of changes you may need to make, and think about ways you can do that.

Which method(s) might you use in your dealings with the stakeholder? If trust seems solid between you and this person, which strategies would you like to implement moving forward with other team members?

Follow Up

Put a reminder on your calendar next week to follow up with the person you spoke with on your proposed solutions. The very foundation of trust is following through with your words and deeds. Your team needs to see that your motives are for them in order to really trust you.

Video: Motivation

Motives

When we find people who seem to truly understand us, next we need to know their motives. What's driving them in this relationship? Are they in it only for themselves and their interests, or do they care about ours as well? We trust people when we know that their motives are good, that they want good things for us, even if at times it might cost them. Good relationships are built on this bedrock of trust: I know that you want the best for me, so I trust you.

Good or Bad?

We tend to think in terms of people's motives being either good or bad—either for us or against us—but a lot of times, people are just neutral toward us. Basically they are just innocently looking out for themselves. There's nothing wrong with that per se, but when we're looking to invest ourselves in a relationship, neutrality is never enough. We need the people we trust to be more than neutral. We need for them to be our allies, champions, and helpers!

Your Motives

When we feel that certain people want the best for us, we invest in them. We trust them. If you sense that a certain doctor cares about your health more than your bill, you invest in that doctor's guidance.

People are going to trust you when they know you are "for" them.

How would you describe your main motivation? Is it for excellence? Is it for people's wellbeing? Is it for the profits?

Showing Your Motives

How do you show what you care about… in your words, actions and behaviors?

Actions on Motivation

What are some intentional actions you could begin to perform that would make your motivations clear to others? When possible, be specific about new actions that you will take with specific individuals. Use names.

Motivation Conversation

Plan to have a 15-minute conversation with a stakeholder. It can be the same person from your "Connection" discussion, or someone else. This discussion can be part of a regular one-on-one meeting with that person. Please take a minute to write down the following questions.

In our work together, do you feel like my motive is for you and your benefit?

Does it seem like I'm for the whole organization or just my agenda?

What else do I care about? What am I motivated by?

What about my behavior makes you feel that way?

What do I do that makes you feel that I'm really for you? What do I do that gets in the way of that?

Motivation Observations

Summarize his/her observations on your motivation.

Your Feelings

How did you feel as that person was speaking?

Body Language

What kind of body language were they presenting at the beginning of the meeting? At the end?

Surprises

Were you surprised by what the person said? Why or why not?

Modifying Your Behavior

Does that person's feedback make you want to modify your behavior? If so, how?

Correspondence Counts

Open your email and look at the 5 most recent emails (or other correspondence) you've sent to that person or the team that that person serves on. Read your language back to yourself.

What motivations are coming across in this language?

Your Motivation in Words

Is your word choice reflecting a motivation for the team, a specific person, the company, or for yourself? How?

Motives Identified

In what ways does your language convey the motivations identified by your team member in the interview?

Representing Your Motives

How we write and speak to our team members conveys a great deal about our motivations. What changes are you going make in how you express yourself through writing?

Video: Ability

Abilities

Someone may have remarkable compassion and empathy for you, and pure motives, but you can trust only if that person has the ability to do what you need done. Someone can be very connected and understanding, and have a really good intent toward us, but still not be trustworthy to do something specific because they don't have the capacity to pull it off. They are not "bad" for that, but we can't entrust certain parts of the mission to them, as they just can't pull it off.

Sometimes It Is Brain Surgery

Do not trust me to do brain surgery. Even if I understand you, and have a good intent, and have good character, I will probably remove the wrong lobe, and every time you blink your right leg will kick. Or worse. But if it comes to understanding and helping you with your leadership issues, I am a better bet. I do have abilities in this domain that are utterly lacking when it comes to brain surgery.

Ability Is Key To Trust

We want to know our pilots have flown before. We want to know our surgeons have cut before, and the patient woke up. We want to know the fund manager can make a return on assets. Otherwise we're not trusting at all; we're gambling. Trust, as noted earlier, is a "confident expectation" that someone can deliver. Ability drives that expectation and confidence in it.

Able To Do The Work

For a technician, a key capability is to fix broken machines. For a CFO, a key capability is looking at finances and creating a strategy. What are the key capabilities you need to have in order for your team to trust you to lead their work?

Demonstrating Abilities

How do you demonstrate your abilities in your everyday work life?

Do They Understand Your Skills?

Do you feel like your team has a clear sense of your capabilities and the role these capabilities have in supporting you? Why or not?

Mentor Conversation

Contact your mentor and arrange a time for a twenty-minute conversation. This does not have to take place in-person. Please write down the following questions for your meeting.

Mentor Conversation

Ask him or her:

As you've moved through your career, what skills and capabilities were required for each new opportunity?

How do you communicate your abilities to your teams in a way that engenders trust?

What new skills should I be developing to stay relevant in this industry?

What are some ways that you sharpen your skills? What education or training have you found most beneficial?

When you feel like your team has lost some trust in you, what steps have you taken to regain that trust?

Mentor Notes

Summarize your mentor's responses

Incorporating Feedback

What are some of the elements he/she talked about that you'd like to incorporate into your own work?

Action on Advice

What are some of the steps you plan to take to make those changes?

Video: Character

More Than Morality

Too often we think of character strictly in moral terms: Is this person honest and ethical? But character is much more than whether or not someone is going to lie, cheat, or steal. Those are merely "permission to play" character traits. Anyone who's dishonest or tries to cheat you or steal shouldn't even be under consideration for your trust. Run away, and keep your hands on your wallet and your heart. That's elementary.

Character Counts

It is virtually impossible to get around talking about character when talking about trust, even though it seems harder to pin down than more easily measurable kinds of performance. It is real nevertheless. You know a character problem when you see it, and your guard instantly goes up. Character encompasses a wide range of attributes—from morals to ethics to personality traits, attitudes, and ways of behaving.

The Whole Of A Person

For instance, if someone is impulsive and leaps into action before they do their due diligence, we would not say that is a moral character issue, but it certainly is a pattern that we see in the person's makeup that affects their work.

Or, if someone is a poor listener, or is a political maneuverer, or is domineering, we would not say they are of "bad" moral character, but we would say that there are issues about their makeup that affect the team. My way of thinking about "character" is that it involves a person's "whole" makeup, not just "moral."

Attributes of Character

I'm talking about other character traits beyond honesty and ethics: Optimist or pessimist? Proactive or passive? Does she persevere and solve problems when things get difficult? Is he too soft for what you need? Too hard? Too rigid? Too impulsive? Too paralyzed by fear of failure? Compassionate? Kind? Brittle? Fun? Resilient? Forgiving? We could go on and on.

But consider this: An individual could have everything we have discussed so far about trust. He or she could be understanding, have good motives, have high ability, and still lack an essential character trait that is needed in your context before you can trust.

The Right Fit?

For instance, what if it's someone who needs a lot of validation and positive feedback, and yet you're going to ask him to take over a failing entity and turn it around? There is not going to be a lot of good news for quite a while. If someone thrives only on positive results, he might not have the staying power for a turnaround. He's a good person, but his character (not moral, but how he is put together) isn't a good fit for this particular job.

Building on Your Character

What character qualities do you feel like you exhibit that build trust in this context?
Ex: Courage, diligence, judgement…

Qualities That Hamper Trust

What character qualities might get in the way?
Ex: Indirect, harsh, impatient…

The best leaders are aware of these issues.

Conversation on Character

Plan to have a 15-minute conversation with a stakeholder. It can be the same person from your earlier conversations, or someone else. This can be part of a regular one-on-one meeting with that person. Please take a minute to write down the following questions.

Character Questions

What character qualities do I exhibit that build trust between us?

Can you cite some specific examples from our work together?

What character qualities do I exhibit that undermine trust?

When I was thinking about my character, I identified the following traits as helpful (list them) and harmful (list them) to trust. Would you agree with my assessment?

Since you've observed my character strengths and weaknesses, do you have any thoughts on actions we could take as a team to accentuate the positive aspects of my character and downplay the negative?

Summary of Thoughts

Summarize your stakeholder's thoughts and reactions here.

Feelings

How were you feeling when you got that feedback? Were you able to receive that feedback from him/her in a productive way? Did you get defensive or try to negate his/her viewpoint?

Character Critique Can Be Hard To Hear

We learn something when we compare our perceptions of ourselves to others'. Recognize that his/her experience and viewpoint is his/her own.

Hearing an assessment of your character can sometimes feel like a character assassination, but acknowledge the extreme level of trust that individual has in you to reveal his/her true thoughts on your behavior. Just having this conversation is a significant step to cultivating trust.

Great Character Qualities For Leadership

There are certain character traits that are required for some jobs, while they are not necessary for others. Some traits are universally applicable. All great leaders possess the following traits which engender trust:

Vulnerability:
…so your team can identify with you, so that you are not so "unlike" them as to be alien. This is the reason that, in a political campaign, commercials show the candidate taking a walk in the park with kids or friends. We see that he or she is a regular person, and everyone feels more comfortable with trusting him or her.

Strength:
…so your team can depend on you. You are the team's advocate and will defend them and their work.

Warmth:
…so your team feels your attitude toward them is positive and kind. People who are cold, aloof, and feel unapproachable create a connection vacuum that can break down trust.

Imperfections:
…so your team sees that you don't always get it right. You make mistakes and have faults.

Ability to Cope:
…so your team sees that you take on mistakes you make directly, deal with them and overcome them. In that way, you are integrating imperfection with problem solving and overcoming, and that gives people a point with which to both identify with and be inspired by you.

Demonstrating Character

Take one trait from this list: Vulnerability, Strength, Warmth, Imperfections, Ability to Cope… Cite a specific example in which you demonstrated this trait to your team. Do you think they recognized this trait within you?

Consistent Character

Brainstorm a list of ways you can demonstrate these traits to your team in your words and actions. Your team will have positive assessments of your character when you've demonstrated it to them on a consistent basis… when you have an established track record of behavior.

Video: Track Record

Track Record

The best predictor of the future is the past, unless there is some intervention that has made things different. That is a track record. If the team is going to trust someone, that person is going to have to build a track record of bringing results in some area, of performing well in that ability, of delivering well in what has been promised, or at least having delivered in ways that would logically make sense to trust her in this new way.

At this moment, how would you rate the track record you have with your team?

Mental Map

Everyone has a mental map of what one can expect from a person: the last time. "The last time I asked you to show up and deliver what I needed, you did. So I feel comfortable going down that road again." Unless you didn't. Then the map shows lots of red flags and stop signs as you approach the trust intersection. We often see these warning signs, but just as often we ignore the signals of trouble. We're often told to give people the benefit of the doubt, and that's a noble intention.

But when we've been down the road with someone before and know that it was potholed and filled with dead man's curves, then we have only ourselves to blame if we jump back into the car with them. Before you do that again, ask yourself, "What would be different about this time? What would have to change for me to trust this person this time?"

The Long View

Extenuating circumstances sometimes intervene. Everyone has an off day or experiences a crisis that might limit performance for a time. Stuff happens. Don't jump to conclusions without taking a longer view of a person's track record. Look not just at the most recent time, but at the broad pattern to determine whether you're dealing with a blip in an otherwise excellent record. The "last time" schema is more about the whole record than one anomaly.

Trust Me?

Trust is not something that is established quickly. Perhaps you meet someone new and within moments they say, "I know what I'm doing with X, TRUST ME." Oh, really? How can you when there isn't a track record?

Trust Builds One Day At A Time

Trust accrues over time with everyday interactions. Sometimes our intentions and our actions collide and actually undermine trust. An example of this might be: When time gets tight, you often cancel all regular meetings. Your intention is to allow your team to focus on a major deadline. Now your team has gotten in the habit of not preparing for meetings, because they can't trust that you'll stick to having them.

The challenge with looking back in the rearview mirror is that the view is yours alone. You have to ask your team how they are interpreting your actions.

In thinking of your own track record, what are some of the ways your intentions and actions might have conflicted?

Track Record Conversations

Plan to have a 15-minute conversation with a stakeholder. It can be the same person from your earlier conversations, or someone else. This can be part of a regular one-on-one meeting with that person. Please take a minute to write down the following questions.

Track Record Questions

What actions as a leader have I been doing in the past year that really make you feel like you can trust me?

Am I consistently following through on my word?

Do you have a sense that the expectations for work are always clear?

Which actions/behaviors have I done that have led to confusion or mistrust?

Are you feeling that I'm trusting of you?

What are some ideas that you have for creating a culture of trust in our team?

Take a moment and review their responses. Identify something there that you'd like to work on. Tell them: I really want to improve on this element that you mentioned. Will you watch me for the next few weeks? I'll check in with you and see if I'm improving.

Summarize Notes

Summarize his/her observations on your track record.

Your Feelings

How did you feel as that person was speaking?

Body Language

What kind of body language were they presenting at the beginning of the meeting? At the end?

Surprises

Were you surprised by what the person said? Why or why not?

Modifying Your Behavior

Does that person's feedback make you want to modify your behavior? If so, how?

Follow Up

Go to your calendar and write a note to yourself to follow up with that person. Ask them if you're improving and in which ways. What do you still need to work on to establish a better track record? The very fact that you are following up with that person will enhance your track record.

Ultimately, Trust Allows Us To Be "All In"

We want our teams to be invested in what we are trying to build. We want individuals to be "all in." And where do we make investments? We make investments when we trust that someone's intent is for our good. We trust when they have the character patterns to make us believe that they will behave in a certain way that we know is "characteristic" of them.

We trust them when we know they have the capacity to pull off whatever we are depending on them to do. And lastly, we trust when they have a track record of good results and positive behavior. Add all of those together, and we want to "invest." We want to place what is of value in their hands.

Trust Will Create Results

The more you develop trust with people, the more secure you will be, and able to take the blinders off and see reality. And vice versa, the more you see reality, the more you will be able to trust good people. You will not be so afraid and suspicious. You will see the good ones for who they are. Then, the more you see reality, the more you will be able to access what really works and get better results.

Your fruitfulness will improve because you will be operating in the world as it really is, and that is where profits are made. The people who see the truth are the ones who always score. And, as you do that, you will become more effective and charge into dealing with negatives like never before. Vice versa, as you engage those problems, you get better results, see more reality, and people trust you more. The circle of integration gets larger, and your heart, mind, and soul expand.

Video: Outro

Congratulations

You've made some major steps in establishing yourself as a leader your team can trust. Keep the 5 Components of Trust in mind and you'll continue to grow.