

# TRUST: RESEARCH PAPER



limeade®



# TRUST POV

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## SUMMARY

Trust is rooted in one's expectations of and vulnerability to the actions of others. Developing trust is a key mechanism through which positive exchange relationships occur and is therefore a cornerstone of any relationship. Building trust is the key process through which individuals develop reciprocal support, loyalty, respect and care (Blau, 1964; Carter & Mossholder, 2015). Within organizations, trust in one's coworkers, teams, supervisors, leaders and organization are critical determinants of performance, exchange of knowledge and ideas, positive attitudes and behaviors and overall organizational effectiveness (Chughtai et al., 2015; Costa et al., 2018; Searle et al., 2011). Because our relationships exert such a strong influence over work outcomes along with individual behaviors, attitudes and well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), understanding how and why trust contributes to work outcomes is key to the success of organizations.

## WHY TRUST MATTERS

Within organizational literature, trust is usually conceived as how willing one individual is to be vulnerable to the actions of another. This vulnerability is based on how strongly they believe the other will perform an action that is favorable or important to them (Aryee et al., 2002; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Trustors develop their expectations both on rational and emotional evaluations of the trustee. Specifically, trust can be broken down into cognition-based trust, which consists of a rational evaluation on the trustee's reliability, dependability, competency and overall ability to carry out obligations; and affect-based trust, which is based on an emotional attachment the trustor has to the trustee that has stemmed from mutual care and concern existing between the trustor and trustee. Trust has also been conceptualized as interpersonal trust, or individual level expectations and vulnerability, and team trust, or collectively shared expectations and vulnerability across a work group (Aryee et al., 2002; Costa et al., 2018).

Overall, trust encompasses positive expectations of and willingness to be vulnerable to actions of others based on the beliefs around the other's competency, honesty and care (Aryee et al., 2002; Rousseau et al., 1998).

## LIMEADE DEFINITION

At Limeade, we believe that trust is the cornerstone of work relationships and a key component of organizational effectiveness. We seek to help build organizations where employees are engaged and



feel a sense of purpose in their work, feel included and able to bring their whole, unique selves to work and where they know their well-being is cared for and protected by their organization. Engagement, inclusion and well-being are elevated when organizations support and care for their employees. However, the positive effects of organizational care and support are only felt when trust exists within the organization and between the organization and its employees (Aryee et al., 2002; Costa et al., 2018).

**WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS, TRUST IS A STEADFAST BELIEF THAT INDIVIDUALS, MANAGERS AND LEADERS ARE TRANSPARENT WITH, CARE FOR AND VALUE ONE ANOTHER.**

## **WHY TRUST WORKS**

Trust is an inherently dyadic construct (Breuer et al., 2016), meaning it involves two parties – a trustor and a trustee – and that reciprocity is key to establishing high levels of trust (Costa et al., 2018). For this reason, when considering the relationship between individuals and the organization they work for, we must consider both the trust employees instill in their organization and the trust the organization instills in their employees. In addition, we must consider what actions both the individual and the organization partake in that increase perceptions of trust in the other.

### **SOCIAL EXCHANGE**

Social exchange theory (SET) states that individuals seek to maintain equity in their relationships and therefore emphasizes reciprocity between two parties as the key mechanism in trust development (Blau, 1964). In order to develop strong trusting relationships, we must make investments that constitute commitment to one another (Aryee et al., 2002). When one party partakes in positive and beneficial actions towards another, SET states the other will subsequently feel obligated to reciprocate in equally positive ways (Chughtai et al., 2015). This reciprocity over time leads to the development of high-quality exchange relationships where both parties feel a sense of mutual loyalty, goodwill, support and trust (Blau, 1964). As reciprocation continues, trust is reinforced and stabilized. If reciprocation fails, trust is violated. Trust therefore develops by parties behaving in ways that demonstrate reciprocity within relationships – as reciprocity continues, trust is cultivated at the individual and team levels and relationships evolve into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments (Costa et al., 2018) that lead to positive work attitudes and behaviors.



## JUSTICE

Because trust is so strongly rooted in social exchange, individual perceptions of justice also play a role in the development of trust. Organizational justice theory (OJT; Greenberg, 1993) focuses on employee perceptions of fairness by categorizing their views and feelings about their own and others' treatment within their organization (Saunders & Thornhill, 2004). Not only do employees attend to their own inputs and outputs, but they also use the social context and information they have about others to gauge how equitable they are being treated. Feelings of inequity, and therefore violations of trust, arise when the ratio of one's outcomes in relation to their inputs are perceived as disproportionate in comparison with others. This idea is additionally in line with social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977), which suggests individual perceptions and attitudes are influenced by social context, as social context provides meanings and guidance around attention and expectations. As such, while trust exists between a dyad, the context of one's team also shapes expectations for trust (Costa et al., 2018).

According to OJT, individuals experience three distinct types of justice: distributive, procedural and interactional. First, levels of trust can be influenced by perceptions of distributive justice, that is, whether the allocation of resources and rewards is viewed as just. Distributive justice is fostered when those in power use appropriate allocation norms when distributing key outcomes (Leventhal, 1976). The appropriate norm is to distribute resources and rewards equally to all employees. When this norm is broken, employees feel a sense of equity distress, which induces a sense of anger if rewards are not in their favor or guilt if rewards are inequitably in their favor. These feelings result in retaliation or withdrawal, both of which undermine reciprocation and break trust. Furthermore, poor distributive justice also increases the likelihood that employees see organizational decision makers as incompetent, unreliable and unprofessional (Colquitt et al., 2012; Saunders & Thornhill, 2004).

Trust is also influenced by a sense of procedural justice or perceived fairness of procedures and processes (i.e., how and why resources and rewards are allocated, particularly when distribution is inequitable). When high levels of distributive justice are unattainable, fostering a sense of procedural justice can help mitigate perceptions of inequity and protect trust from being broken (Colquitt et al., 2012; Leventhal, 1980; Saunders & Thornhill, 2004). To increase perceptions of procedural justice, organizational leadership should utilize procedures that are consistent, accurate, unbiased, representative of group concerns and ethical (Leventhal, 1980). When employers give employees opportunities to voice their concerns and provide input on certain processes, it fosters a mutual investment and information sharing, which both contribute to trust. Involving employees and hearing employee concerns when it comes to decision making instills a sense of belonging in relationships



and contributes to social exchange and trust, even when resources cannot be distributed equitably (Colquitt et al., 2012). In addition, when organizations develop and communicate consistent processes, it creates a predictable and dependable track record, thereby instilling a sense of cognition-based trust towards the organization in employees.

Finally, trust can be impacted by a sense of interactional justice. Interactional justice consists both of informational justice (i.e., communication and honest explanations for decision making) and interpersonal justice (i.e., how well an individual feels they are being treated within their interpersonal relationships). When employers treat employees with dignity and respect, communicating clearly with employees and refraining from unethical or improper behaviors or communication, perceptions of interactional justice are improved (Colquitt et al., 2012; Greenberg, 1993). Informational justice highlights the importance of clear and consistent communication with employees and contributes to employee perceptions of the dependability and professionalism of organizations, which is linked to cognitive-based trust. When information is lacking or inconsistent, employees are more likely to view the organization as unreliable and unprofessional. Interpersonal justice emphasizes social relationships, supportiveness, morale and warmth (Carr et al., 2003) and contributes to feelings of affect-based trust (Colquitt et al., 2012). When employees feel they have been treated disrespectfully or in a cold manner, their emotional attachment to and trust in the organization is broken (Colquitt et al., 2012; Saunders & Thornhill, 2004).

Based on these theories, we can understand that trust is heavily rooted in social exchange and how an employee feels they are being treated. Based on the principles of social exchange and organizational justice, there are several drivers of trust that include team level behaviors and characteristics (e.g., team composition, cooperation, monitoring behaviors), certain types of leadership and leader behaviors and organizational and contextual characteristics (e.g., culture, human resource management processes). Further, as trust continues to grow, there are several important outcomes that take place including individual, team and organizational performance, improved well-being and motivation and increased team-oriented behavior and communication.



# DRIVERS OF TRUST

## TEAM CHARACTERISTICS

According to social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977) social contexts provide meaning and guidance for an individual's expectations (Costa et al., 2018). For that reason, characteristics of and behaviors within one's team play a role in determining trust. First, certain characteristics of one's team contribute to the development of trust among team members. For example, a meta-analysis from Costa and colleagues (2018) found that team composition, or the demographic diversity or cross functionality of teams, made it more difficult to form trust. Individuals who came from different demographic and professional backgrounds, whose jobs served different purposes, or whose skills differed from their coworkers', experience higher levels of unshared or conflicting goals, which mitigates the development of trust. However, Cheung and colleagues (2016) examined functional diversity (how members differ in terms of work experiences; Bunderson & Sutcliffe, 2002) and found functionally diverse teams who had high levels of affect-based trust demonstrated higher levels of knowledge sharing and innovation than teams who had low levels of trust. While diverse teams may find it more difficult to establish trust upfront, they ultimately benefit from doing so. This emphasizes the importance of implementing strategies to mitigate barriers to trust, as well as the importance of inclusion and communication. Some strategies include creating trust-building opportunities, providing time and space for members to develop interpersonal relationships, ensuring inclusion practices within the organization, as well as positive norms for open communication.

Other research has focused on interdependence and cooperation within teams. A meta-analysis found that task interdependence within teams, or the degree to which members rely on each other and must interact to meet goals, boosts trust, performance, knowledge sharing and team effectiveness (Costa et al., 2018). Further, teams that have stronger relationship ties and friendships have stronger beliefs that their actions will be reciprocated and therefore experience higher levels of trust (Costa et al., 2018). Teams with shared work values and shared mental models (i.e., mental representation of tasks, roles, goals and attitudes shared by members) also have stronger cooperation and trust within their team (Chou et al., 2008). Overall, when teams have strong relational ties, share their workload, and are aware of the goals, tasks and competencies of others, they are much more likely to cooperate with each other. This means that they are more willing to share information, accept influence and input from others and communicate. Further, they are less likely to be defensive and withhold information. This not only works to establish trust, but fosters interdependence and cooperation that helps to sustain trust (Costa et al., 2018). As reciprocity propagates, team climates that are characterized



by interpersonal trust and mutual respect grow. These climates help members feel that their team will not rebuke, marginalize, or penalize them for sharing thoughts or challenging opinions – team members feel psychologically safe (i.e., feeling a sense of security in sharing your true self and taking interpersonal risks) and that they can bring their unique selves to work (Edmondson, 1999). Interdependence and cooperation can be elevated by providing opportunities for teamwork, making teamwork actions more critical and developing communication and knowledge sharing networks for employees.

## LEADER CHARACTERISTICS

Leaders are also critical in development of trust within organizations. Researchers have examined various philosophies (e.g., ethical leadership, servant leadership) of leadership and specific leader behaviors regarding trust. Transformational leadership, which is defined by four leader characteristics and behaviors, is linked to increased levels of trust among members of organizations (Arnold et al., 2001; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Specifically, transformational leaders demonstrate individualized consideration (treating each employee as a unique individual), inspirational motivation (communicating a clear vision), intellectual stimulation (challenging employees in positive ways) and idealized influence (acting as a role model; Bass, 1985). When leaders partake in these behaviors, they cultivate and maintain compelling vision and goals, and also provides clear structure in how employees can partake in pursuit of those goals. This improves perceptions of team capabilities across tasks and context, thereby increasing levels of cognition-based trust in leaders (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Additionally, this trust makes employees feel more psychologically safe in their work environment and in interactions with other members of their team or organization.

Other lines of research have emphasized servant leadership as an effective way for increasing trust within organizations. Servant leadership emphasizes serving others, building a sense of community, emphasizing teamwork and sharing power. Servant leaders emphasize and promote the welfare of their employees by conveying support to their employees, building a sense of community, addressing and minimizing relationship conflicts and nurturing the unique potential within all employees. (Greenleaf, 2002; Schaubroeck, et al., 2011). Schaubroeck and colleagues (2011) found that servant leadership predicted affect based trust above and beyond transformational leadership. Servant leadership gives employees the expectation that their leader will behave in a caring and altruistic manner, which promotes feelings of psychological safety and subsequently trust.





Researchers have also considered how ethical leadership promotes trust. Ethical leaders adhere to and demonstrate normatively appropriate conduct through their personal actions and interpersonal relationships. They encourage this same conduct to their employees through communication, positive reinforcement and decision making (Den Hartog, 2015). Ethical leaders model moral behaviors, communicate ethical standards and hold their employees accountable for ethical behavior (Brown et al., 2005). These leaders are therefore seen as moral, honest, fair and caring (Chughtai et al., 2015; Engelbrecht et al., 2017) – they are leaders who genuinely care, encourage employees to voice concerns and make fair and balanced decisions, which fosters trust among employees (Chughtai et al., 2015).

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The organizational context is a large determinant of how trust develops among individuals within organizations because individuals' perceptions and attitudes are influenced by the social context they are embedded in (social information processing theory; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). The social context of organizations and teams shapes trust among members and facilitates the emergence of trust at organizational and team levels (Costa et al., 2018). It is important for organizations to understand how they can develop structures, practices, cultures and climates that are conducive to trust.

There are several factors organizations should attend to, including organizational structure, human resource management practices and organizational culture and climate. First, highly rigid or formal organizational structures are less conducive to trust than are more participative, inclusive and flexible structures (Costa et al., 2018). When it comes to things like communication or decision-making processes, it is important that organizations encourage cross communication among teams, have tools that allow employees to communicate easily, provide clear communication channels between leadership and front-line employees and empower employees to participate in decision making processes. They should also value and take employees' opinions into account and providing rationale and interpersonal respect during decision making (especially when employees cannot play a role in decision making). Having clear communication and empowerment in decision making shows employees that they are valued, which engenders trust and likelihood that employees will reciprocate.

Organizations should also ensure that they implement fair and motivating human resource management (HRM) practices (Costa et al., 2018). For example, systems that provide fair and internally motivating rewards enhance trust among employees. Further, team rewards and incentives help



members to develop team trust but can be demotivating for particularly high performing members. It is therefore important to have reward and incentive systems that are both individual- and team-based so that employees are motivated and additionally feel responsible for their personal contributions to team success. HRM practices that facilitate employee autonomy and that enable employees to work cross-functionally also increase trust by fostering personal networks and communities (Costa et al., 2018).

Finally, organizational cultures and climates centered around ethical behavior, corporate social responsibility and psychological safety create trust within organizations from the top down (Costa et al., 2018; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Rupp & Mallory, 2015). Further, collaborative cultures increase employees' willingness to cooperate, share information, offer different viewpoints and openly discuss problems. When culture and climate make employees feel like the organization makes well-informed, ethical decisions, cares about their communities and employees and empowers and includes employees, individuals are more trusting in the organization. They are subsequently much more likely to cooperate with, contribute to and reciprocate support to the organization. These types of cultures can be fostered by incorporating policies, procedures and practices that empower employees, include employees in organizational decision making and that value interpersonal and cross-team relationships (Costa et al., 2018).

## OUTCOMES OF TRUST

### PERFORMANCE

A key outcome of trust is performance at the individual, team and organizational level. Several researchers have examined how interpersonal and team trust contribute to performance and overall organizational effectiveness. DeJong and colleagues (2016) focused on team performance, that is, the extent to which a team as a whole accomplishes its goal or mission. They argue that trust helps team members to suspend uncertainty towards their teammates, which allows them to interact with teammates more vulnerably. Trust enables team members to work together more effectively and efficiently and to allocate key resources and energy in ways that contribute to team performance. When trust does not exist within teams, members lose sight of team goals and focus instead on personal interests. Without trust, team members are more likely to be defensive, withhold information, consume resources that could have otherwise been spent on team goal attainment. In their meta-analysis, DeJong et al. (2016) found that intrateam trust positively related to team performance and did so even when they controlled for trust in leadership and past team performance. This indicates that



while trust in leadership and past team performance contribute to team performance, having trust within one's team furthers trust even more.

Other studies have focused on exactly how trust influences performance. For example, De Jong and Elfring (2010) found that trust was associated with higher levels of team monitoring and team effort, which led to improved performance. When teams were more trusting in one another, they felt more comfortable and willing to look out for their teammates and help them to get back on track if needed. Further, teams that were more trusting put more effort into their work, which led to improved performance. They showed that relationships and intrateam trust are important to foster in order to improve performance. Lau and colleagues (2014) took a self-evaluative stance and studied how trust related to feelings of oneself. They found that when employees felt as though their supervisors trusted them, they had higher organization-based self-esteem. Improved self-esteem led to subsequent improvements in performance. Furthermore, collective team felt trust by top management led to better sales performance, which benefitted the organization overall. This indicates the importance of feeling trusted and demonstrates that social information can often be internalized and reflected in feelings about oneself. For this reason, leaders should consider adopting behaviors that are highly visible, convey explicit expressions of trust and that give information, power and control to employees.

## **WELL-BEING AND ENGAGEMENT**

Because trust is the cornerstone of positive exchange relationships, it also plays a huge role in individual well-being. Positive relationships provide us with social support (that can be emotional, instrumental, etc.) and feelings of belonging and relatedness, which are key for maintaining positive well-being and inclusion (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Shore et al., 2018). Humans are inherently social beings and high levels of trust or perceived trust indicate that we have positive, fulfilling, reliable and supportive relationships, which subsequently enhances psychological and physical well-being. In line with this, a 2016 well-being and engagement report conducted by Limeade and Quantum Workplace uncovered four cultural attributes that matter most in driving cultures that support well-being. Two of these four attributes were cultures that are trustworthy and cultures where employees are trusted. This demonstrates that employees' well-being is supported when they trust in their organization and feel that they are trusted by their organization (Limeade & Quantum Workplace, 2016).

Research on trust has demonstrated links between trust and indicators of work-related well-being. For example, Chughtai and colleagues (2015) examined trust as an outcome of ethical leadership, but also demonstrated ways in which trust impacts employees' engagement and exhaustion. They found that



when employees had greater levels of trust in their supervisors, they reciprocated under the norms of social exchange by approaching work with greater engagement. Trust induced a positive exchange relationship, which energized employees at work. In addition, these positive exchange relationships induced positive perceptions of equity, which minimized exhaustion and vulnerability to burnout. Overall, research has found that ethical leadership sustains high levels of trust and creates a climate that is conducive to higher work engagement (Chughtai et al., 2015; Engelbrecht et al., 2017).

## TEAM BEHAVIORS AND COMMUNICATION

Trust in organizations promotes positive intrateam behaviors and communication. While positive communication is a way that teams can build trust, positive communication behaviors also begin to flourish as trust grows (Aryee et al., 2002; Chughtai et al., 2015). Trust has been linked to higher levels of organizational commitment, intention to remain with the organizations and civic virtue, that is, behaviors that indicate concern and active interest in the well-being of the organization (Aryee et al., 2002; Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Further, trust in one's supervisor is related to supervisor-directed citizenship behavior, altruism and courtesy (Aryee et al., 2002; Podsakoff et al., 1990). In their meta-analysis, Costa and colleagues (2018) found that with higher levels of trust, individuals felt more loyal to their organization, communicated more openly, shared more knowledge, solved more problems and implemented more innovative and proactive ideas. Further, teams were more cohesive, learned more, performed more organizational citizenship behaviors, were more innovative and had a stronger psychological safety climate (Costa et al., 2018).

Breuer and colleagues (2016) looked at trust in its relation to team effectiveness. Teams with higher levels of trust participated in more risk-taking behaviors. These behaviors included sharing information, asking for help, sharing and asking for feedback and discussing conflicts and mistakes openly (Breuer et al., 2014; Edmondson, 2002). Risk taking improved coordination and cooperation within teams, meaning they did a better job of interacting and forming psychological relationships for mutual gain and of orchestrating interdependent team workflow (Breuer et al., 2016; Kozlowski & Bell, 2013). Teams that had higher intrateam trust also showed better social exchange through increased helping behaviors and investments of reciprocal effort (Breuer et al., 2016).

Teams sometimes face challenges in developing high levels of trust, but research has shown that functionally diverse teams that also maintain trust demonstrate increased innovation. Specifically, when functionally diverse teams had low levels of trust, they shared less knowledge and subsequently experienced low levels of innovation. However, functionally diverse teams with high levels of trust were more cooperative, had faith in others' intentions and shared more resources and knowledge, which led



to increased innovation. Though diverse backgrounds and skills contribute to innovation,

this relationship can be dependent on trust, so it is key for organizations to enable teams to develop strong, positive relationships when members first come together and to maintain those reciprocal exchanges as the team continues working together.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

### VIRTUALITY

Teams are becoming more virtual and less traditional as workplace technology continues to advance. It is therefore important to consider how virtuality and technology influences formation of trust to ensure that high levels of trust and positive relationships are developed in less traditional teams. Developing trust can be challenging in face-to-face (FTF) teams, but virtual teams may experience unique roadblocks (e.g., technological difficulties when communicating, fewer opportunities for informal communication or social activities outside of work). Virtual teams take longer to develop trust because they need more time to exchange social information. However, some research has shown that virtuality also provide unique facilities for effective collaboration. Specifically, virtual teams frequently use websites that provide information on the competencies and personal interests of team members, chat systems that enable support and cooperation and tools that show availability of team members (Breuer et al., 2016). While FTF teams may still have access to these resources, they are essential to use daily for virtual teams. To further support this point, Breuer and colleagues (2016) found that the link between trust and performance was stronger in virtual teams than in FTF teams.

Yakovleva and colleagues (2010) have also emphasized the importance of trust within virtual and geographically dispersed teams. They examined factors that aided in the development of trust between pairs of coworkers in a new team and found that propensity to trust mattered. In other words, pairs that were more trusting in general developed higher levels of trust. Further, trustworthiness mediated this relationship, meaning that if one's partner felt they were trustworthy, trust was even stronger. While these are trait constructs, this study emphasizes the importance of taking time to get to know one's virtual team.

Trust grows in virtual teams as members continue to demonstrate reliability, consistency and responsiveness (Costa et al., 2008). Because virtual teams can experience difficulties developing



relationships and trust, it is crucial to have processes and norms that aid this development. In addition, the global workforce is changing and virtual teams, global teams and simply just elements of virtuality within traditional teams are becoming more and more common. To develop trust in changing organizations, it is important for virtual teams to initiate communication strategies like expressing enthusiasm, responding in a timely and meaningful manner, providing feedback, providing transparent information and exchanging information about team processes.

## AGREEMENT

Another line of research addresses the fact that individuals do not always agree on how much they trust their partner, team or organization. Carter and Mossholder (2015) found that congruence in trust matters and that individuals not having similar levels of trust in the other can mitigate the positive effects of trust on certain outcomes (DeJong & Dirks, 2012). Specifically, they found that performance was higher when affect-based trust levels were congruent across a team. Trust stems from a mutual understanding of relational and reciprocal processes (e.g., communication, attraction, socioemotional support; Edwards & Cable, 2009), so when individuals do not agree in trust, reciprocity of behavior is affected (Carter & Mossholder, 2015).

De Jong and Dirks (2012) studied trust asymmetry, that is, the extent to which two parties differ in level of trust for one another, as well as monitoring dissensus, or the extent to which members held differing perceptions of the amount of monitoring (i.e., keeping track of teammates' work to ensure everything is on track) that occurred within the team. They found that teams who disagreed on perceptions of trust experienced decreased performance. Further, when people disagreed on how much team monitoring was taking place, trust suffered. This research shows that it is important for teams to identify where and how trust is beneficial for attaining team goals. Though peer monitoring is a behavior that can enhance trust, if it is not a norm within a team or is not agreed upon, it can undermine intrateam trust. Specifically, when monitoring is not a norm, perceptions of monitoring may be interpreted as a lack of trust, which undermines intrateam processes (Langfred, 2004). For that reason, it is additionally important to develop positive climates for monitoring as a necessary and normal part of teamwork.

## INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

### DRIVERS

- Propensity to trust
- Trustworthiness
- Mutual (reciprocated) respect and support
- Attentiveness and listening
- Interpersonal interactions and communication (i.e., reciprocation)

### OUTCOMES

- Performance
- Organization-based self-esteem
- Social support (e.g., emotional support, instrumental support)
- Well-being (e.g., feelings of belongingness, sense of community)
- Engagement and exhaustion

## TEAM LEVEL

### DRIVERS

- Team composition (i.e., demographic and functional diversity)
- Task interdependence and cooperation
- Relational ties (i.e., friendships, connections with others)
- Shared work values
- Shared mental models (i.e., mental representation of tasks, roles, goals and attitudes)
- Communication behavior (e.g., information sharing, peer monitoring)
- Virtuality
- Agreement on norms

### OUTCOMES

- Team performance (i.e., accomplishing team goals, effective collaboration)
- Communication behaviors (e.g., information sharing, withholding information, asking for help, seeking feedback, discussing conflicts and mistakes)
- Job attitudes (e.g., commitment, civic virtue, loyalty)
- Team cohesion, inclusion and innovation

## LEADERSHIP LEVEL

### DRIVERS

- Transformational leadership (i.e., individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence)
- Servant leadership
- Ethical leadership
- Empowering employees, instilling trust

### OUTCOMES

- Dyadic citizenship behavior
- Knowledge sharing and communication

## ORGANIZATION LEVEL

### DRIVERS

- Organizational structure
- Human resource management practices
- Organizational culture (i.e., norms based on policies, procedures and practices)
- Decision making processes
- Organizational climate (e.g., psychological safety climate, group voice climate)
- Corporate social responsibility

### OUTCOMES

- Organizational performance and effectiveness
- Sales performance and revenue
- Psychological safety climate
- Innovation



## CONCLUSION

Developing trust is the key process through which individuals develop reciprocal support, loyalty, respect and care (Blau, 1964; Carter & Mossholder, 2015). Within organizations, trust in one's coworkers, teams, supervisors, leaders and organization are critical determinants of performance, well-being, exchange of knowledge and ideas, positive attitudes and behaviors and overall organizational effectiveness (Chughtai et al., 2015; Costa et al., 2018; Searle et al., 2011). Trust is a major component in developing positive forms of communication among teammates, inclusion, well-being and in driving team engagement and performance. In order to drive these outcomes, we have developed several recommendations around how individuals, managers and organizations can enable high levels of trust within their teams and organizations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### INDIVIDUAL

- 1. COMMUNICATE REGULARLY.** Communication with teammates is a must when it comes to trust. Teams who have stronger relational ties and are aware of the goals, tasks and competences of others are much more likely to cooperate with each other. For these ties and awareness to be developed, teammates should communicate with each other both formally and informally. They can do this by setting regular team check-in meetings, regularly chatting online, or stopping by coworkers' desks regularly to chat about work- and non-work-related topics. Having frequent, positive and casual communication will help develop relational ties that lead to trust.
- 2. RESPECT OTHERS.** Strong positive exchange relationships, characterized by mutual respect, concern and support, contribute to trust among teammates. For trust to develop within teams, members must treat each other with respect and reciprocate support. Maintaining a standard of respect and support when communicating and working with coworkers will help individuals to feel more psychologically safe and included at work. Individuals can facilitate these relationships by using inclusive language, recognizing others for their contributions, or asking for others' thoughts, opinions and contributions.





## MANAGERIAL

- 1. SERVE YOUR EMPLOYEES.** Leaders and managers can demonstrate certain behaviors that instill trust among their teams. Servant leadership is closely tied to trust and includes serving others, building a sense of community, emphasizing teamwork and sharing power. Things like advocating for employees' welfare, addressing team conflicts and providing individualized concern for employees conveys to employees that their leader will continue to behave in a way that is caring and altruistic, which allows trust to develop.
- 2. MAINTAIN MORAL STANDARDS.** Ethical leader behaviors also help to increase trust among teams. Ethical leaders demonstrate moral and fair behaviors and decision making. They communicate ethical standards to employees and hold employees accountable for ethical behavior. Because leaders are not always able to make decisions that please everyone, it is important that they maintain a moral code and communicate why certain decisions are made in order to instill trust in employees.
- 3. FOSTER NORMS FOR TRUST.** Leaders can also create spaces and tasks that encourage teamwork. They play a role in developing the norms around trust for employees and can do so by incorporating more teamwork and interdependent tasks within their work-groups. It is also important that leaders maintain a standard for respect, mutual support and communication throughout teamwork so that employees develop trust in each other.

## ORGANIZATIONAL

- 1. CREATE NORMS FOR TRUST.** Organizational culture and climate is an avenue through which organizations create trust in the workplace. Organizations can create norms and cultures of trust by prescribing trust building opportunities, providing spaces and events for members to develop interpersonal relationships, advocating for and ensuring inclusive practices and incorporating policies, procedures and practices that empower employees and include employees in organizational decision making. When trust and positive social exchange is endorsed in organizations' policies, procedures and practices, it becomes an expectation and norm among employees. Organizations can also demonstrate ethical behavior and corporate social responsibility (e.g., treating employees equitably, communicating decisions to employees, donating to social causes). These organizational behaviors make employees feel that they are a part of a psychologically safe work environment that supports their well-being.



**2. EMPOWER EMPLOYEES THROUGH COMMUNICATION.** Because communication is a large part of developing trust among employees, organizations can foster trust by encouraging communication among and across teams. Ways organizations can do this is by incorporating more cross-functional projects that involve various backgrounds, providing clear communication channels between leadership and front-line employees and providing tools and spaces for employees to communicate easily (as well as formally and informally). Communication during decision making processes is of particular importance to ensure equity is maintained. Organizations should empower employees to take part in decision making processes, value and take employees' opinions into account and provide rationale and interpersonal respect during decision making (especially when employees cannot play a role in decision making). Clarity and empowerment show employees that they are valued, which engenders trust.



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