

NAVIGATING TRUST

A ROADMAP FOR LEADERS

(Including the 66 Ways to Build Trust)



ALAIN HUNKINS
Building Strong Leaders

Trust

It's essential to life.

You can't have hope without it.

You can't make lasting connections without it.

You can't lead a business without it.

But you may not have realized that trust influences everything you do at work.

In business, every commercial transaction has an element of trust. Without trust, commerce would grind to a halt.

Creating more trust creates more business opportunities. Examples of this include:

- Repeat Business
- Referrals
- Word of Mouth Marketing
- Brand and Employee Loyalty
- Employer of Choice

All this translates into better future business results.

Now, think of your job, your career - How much of your life do you spend at work?

You probably spend more time on the job than you do with your own family.

You work hard. In all that time you spend at work, you're laboring to accomplish one or more of these goals:

1. Grow Revenue
2. Reduce Cost
3. Improve Customer Satisfaction
4. Increase Quality

In fact, you probably exert the majority of your efforts to produce one of these objectives.

However, if I were to ask you to go produce some trust, what would you *do*? That's a bit trickier, right?

Trust isn't something you do in and of itself. It comes as a result of *how* you do everything else.

In this book, you will learn:

- Why building trust is so essential for leaders
- The four dimensions of trust
- How to decide on which dimension of trust to focus on first
- 66 action steps to build trust

This content will help you:

- Improve the quality of your leadership brand
- Leverage your leadership strengths
- Build more effective working relationships
- Increase your business results

Leadership & Trust

If you're in a leadership role, understanding how trust works and how to build it is essential. As a leader, you're only successful if the people you lead succeed. A big part of your job is to design a work environment where people can thrive and perform at their best. If that environment has little trust, not only will people not thrive, they'll barely survive.

A workplace without trust is like air without oxygen. People suffer, and so do their results. Conversely, if trust is high, both people and results prosper. For example, a Watson Wyatt study found that high-trust organizations outperform low-trust organizations in total return to shareholders by 286 percent¹.

The need for trust probably strikes you as common sense. That's because it is. However, just because it's common sense doesn't make it common practice.

A 2016 survey by the Tax and Advisory services company [Ernst & Young](#)² found that less than half of full-time workers place a great deal of trust in their employers.

Are you building the trust you need to get the results you want?

In our 21st Century, the nature of work has changed. Leaders who don't know how to build trust will get left behind. Here are three things every leader needs to know about trust:

1. **Trust is the new currency of work.** In our high-tech, mobile age, it's easier than ever for employees to jump ship. Loyalty and engagement cannot be drilled from the top of an organization chart on down. Commitment is built from the ground up, one relationship at a time.

¹ Watson Wyatt 2002 Survey, cited in http://www.speedoftrust.com/how-the-speed-of-trust-works/business_case

² [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-global-generations-a-global-study-on-work-life-challenges-across-generations/\\$FILE/EY-global-generations-a-global-study-on-work-life-challenges-across-generations.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-global-generations-a-global-study-on-work-life-challenges-across-generations/$FILE/EY-global-generations-a-global-study-on-work-life-challenges-across-generations.pdf)

2. **Your position gives you authority, but not power.** Today, no leader is trusted blindly. Trust is created through your daily actions – what you say and what you do.
3. **Trust is the key to innovation.** Innovation is all about trying to make things better to create value. People won't make the effort to create or improve something if the culture is fear-based. Complacency is a byproduct of working in a place where the risk of making change outweighs the risk of sticking with the *status quo*. People only take risks if they trust they won't be punished for doing so.

Leading in today's workplace is more challenging than ever before. While it's hard work, the leader who creates a high-trust culture reaps these six benefits:

1. **Your influence grows.** Leaders who are trusted attract others to them. More people will follow your lead, regardless of your title or seniority.
2. **You'll gain better information.** When people trust you, they'll open up to you and share more details. This will enable you to gain greater insights and make better decisions.
3. **You'll get better results.** Based on #2, when you make better decisions, your choices lead to better outcomes.
4. **You'll build your brand reputation.** Word of mouth recommendations, referrals and top talent will come knocking on your door. People want to work with others who are known for creating valuable business relationships.
5. **You get early warning signals.** When you've built trust, people have your back. They want you to succeed. They'll forecast any warnings that could be harmful to you down the road.

- 6. You'll decrease your stress.** When others trust you, they cut you some slack. Your trust reputation creates a halo effect, where your mistakes are more easily forgiven.

Here's the bottom line: People don't give their vision, innovations, enthusiasm, respect, engagement, or best work to people they don't trust.

Investing your time and effort to create a climate where people trust you is an outlay that pays massive dividends.

The Four Dimensions of Trust

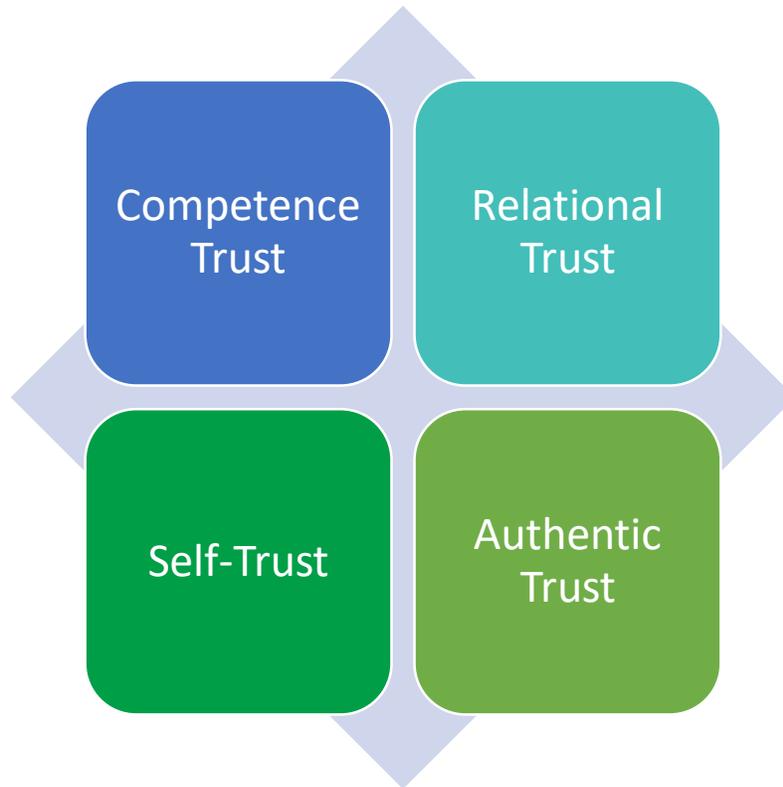
How many different words do you use to describe snow? Probably one: Snow. As in "It's snowing outside."

However, if you were an Inuit Eskimo, you might have close to fifty words. For example, one of those words is *piegnartoq* – meaning the *snow [that is] good for driving sled*. The reason the Inuits created all these different words for snow was that their success and survival depended on their ability to navigate their landscape. More specific words were more useful and effective.

Leading your workplace landscape is no different. To succeed as a leader, you have to have a keen understanding of how relationship dynamics operate. You need more specific language than "I trust them" or "I don't trust them". To be more effective, you need to sharpen your trust-building skills.

To help you better navigate the landscape of relationships and trust, you'll need a new map:

The Four Dimensions of Trust



There are four dimensions of trust. Each dimension focuses on a different piece of the trust-building process. All four pieces are important, and each piece affects the other dimensions around them.

As you review the topline definitions of the four dimensions, take note of the following:

- Which dimension(s) (if any) seems like my strength?
- Which dimension(s) (if any) seems to be my greatest area for development?
- Are there any actions that I already do that I know are strengths in this dimension?
- Are there actions that I already know I should be doing to strengthen this dimension?

Give yourself some time and space to be self-reflective. The starting point for all personal and professional development is self-awareness. Pay attention to where you are, and what you're already doing. You can't change what you don't notice.

1. [Competence Trust](#)

Your competence is your ability to do something well enough to meet a certain standard. That's simple enough. The tricky part is that as a leader, the standard isn't set by you; it's set by the people you lead.

As a leader, you are watched like a hawk, and not only do your actions get put under the microscope, so do your non-actions. That means that everything you do or don't do, say or don't say - is judged according to their standard. That standard is completely subjective, varies from person to person, and includes the countless fine points of your leadership role that are difficult to measure.

Competence Trust is other's trust in your ability to do your job well.

2. [Relational Trust](#)

Leadership is a relationship between two people. The strongest indicator of relationship health is how you feel around that other person. For example, are there some leaders who make you feel smart? Others who make you feel stupid? This is relational trust in action.

Relational Trust is the trust that is built in the interpersonal social exchanges that people have with each other. We can have dozen, even hundreds, of these exchanges every day.

3. Authentic Trust

Think about the people in your life you trust the most. What is it that makes you trust them so much? There's a pretty good chance that with these people, you're able to drop your defenses. You don't have to pretend and keep up appearances. You can be vulnerable with them.

Authentic Trust is trust built from honest emotional expression. It's the connection you feel when someone is real with you.

4. Self-Trust

How do you feel when you are performing at your best? Most people respond with words like:

- Joyful
- Focused
- Energized
- Absorbed
- Excited
- Enthusiastic

Self-Trust is the trust that comes when you feel confidence in yourself. It's what you feel when you tap into your internal resources (physical, emotional, mental) that help you to achieve.

The 66 Action Steps

The 66 Ways to Build Trust are 66 specific actions that you can take to increase your success in the four dimensions of trust. As you read each action in isolation, you'll notice that none of them is particularly complicated. The real challenge is in doing them consistently in your fast-paced and challenging workday.

The action steps are categorized into one of the four dimensions, although you will see some overlap: some of the actions could belong in more than one dimension. If there's a particular dimension that you want to get started with, feel free to jump to that section. Good luck on your trust building journey!

Competence Trust

1. Be Honest

The best leaders are intentional. That means they clearly align values, thoughts, words, and actions. That's what being *in integrity* is all about. Become extremely mindful of what passes from your lips. Get into the habit of treating your word as if they were gold. As a leader, your reputation rises or falls on your credibility. If you lack credibility, who is going to follow you?

2. Show Up On Time

Lateness is about much more than just a few wasted minutes. There's a reason we make such a big deal about lateness. When you're late, your behavior sends the message that "I don't care about you." When you're on time, you send a message that you value the other person. For leaders, being on time should be considered the entry-level cost of doing business. Treat this skill as a big deal: It is. Think about it - timeliness is the most visible and easiest thing in the world to measure: you're either here or you're not.

3. Lead by Example

People watch what you do much more than what you say. As a leader, you're constantly under the microscope. Everything you do and say (or don't do and don't say) is picked apart and analyzed. Whether this is good or bad or fair or unfair is not worth debating; it's just the way it is. Know that every action you take should be a reflection of the type of leader you aspire to be. How do you act when no one is watching? Someone may be watching.

4. Do What You Say You Will Do

Accountability comes from the world of accounting. In finance, the two sides of the balance sheet (assets and liabilities) need to equal each other to be in account. In leadership, the two sides of your balance sheet are "What You Say You'll Do" and "What You Actually Did". If you say you'll get someone the report by Friday at noon, get it to them by noon Friday. This is being accountable for your actions. Do this, and pretty soon, people will see you as someone they can count on.

5. Be Consistent

The people you lead don't like surprises. If your behavior is unpredictable, you create anxiety for those around you. Have you ever worked with someone who is focused on Monday and Wednesday, sloppy on Tuesday and Thursday, and can't be found on Friday? When you are consistent, people know what to expect from you, which helps them to relax. After all, no one does their best work when they're stressed out.

6. Be Available

You can have the best of intentions, but your leadership is measured on your actions. If someone wants to connect with you, do they have to jump through hoops for an appointment to see you? Building trust depends on “face time”. If you want people to be engaged at work, you have to engage with them. Engagement, by its nature, takes time. If you are inaccessible, you create a divide between you and those you hope to lead.

7. Communicate Clearly

Say what you mean, and mean what you say. Conscious leadership starts with conscious language. People can't tell where you stand if you don't express yourself clearly. Clear communication shows people you're willing to hold yourself accountable. Waffles are great for breakfast, but they make for lousy leaders. When speaking or writing, don't just “show up and throw up”. Rehearse or rewrite to edit your thoughts for clarity. If professional writers use editors, shouldn't you use one too?

8. Follow Through Visibly

What separates the amateurs from the pros? Pros get stuff done. No doubt everyone in your workplace has multiple projects and things to do all happening at once. Being so busy, they can't keep their eyes on everything that you do. Being accountable (See #4) means you're already done what you said you'd do. Following through is about closing the loop. When follow through *visibly*, you do accomplish three fantastic things in one fell swoop:

1. You let others know you've fulfilled your commitment.
2. You give others a quick dopamine hit of pleasure – the same kind of pleasure that you get when you cross an item off of your to-do list.
3. You become one less thing to worry about.

You know – and they know – the pro has got it handled.

9. Deliver Value, Not a Work Product

No one is interested in your work. They're interested in the value that your work brings. Before you labor away on your project, ask "What value is my customer (internal or external) looking for? What could I do to deliver as much value as possible?" Asking this question will help you generate ideas to not only meet their need, but to go above and beyond what's expected. Think results, not effort.

10. Go the Extra Mile

Someone's considered "outstanding" when they stand out. If you meet other's expectations, you're adequate. But when you go the extra mile and add value that wasn't expected, you've just ventured into WOW! territory. Their experience of working with you has just jumped from "satisfied" to "delighted!" When you delight someone with a WOW! you put some major deposits in their emotional bank account.

11. Respond Quickly

If someone's reached out to you, they have some kind of an unmet need. For them, that request (email, voicemail, etc.) is now a psychological open loop. Open loops naturally seek closure. The sooner you get back to them, the quicker they'll experience the pleasurable relief that closure brings. If you can't get back to them quickly, have an auto-responder that lets them know exactly when you will respond.

12. Keep Confidences

Leaders need to know what to share, when to share, and when not to share. If someone's asked you to keep something (that is legal and legitimate) in confidence, keep it to yourself. Violating someone's confidence is often considered a betrayal of the highest order. Doing so may put you on the fast track to destroying the relationship.

13. Share the Big Picture

When you share the big picture, you are providing mental comfort. When people get the 30,000 foot view, they can then see how their smaller piece fits into the larger whole. Many leaders skip this step, because they assume that others already know the big picture. Just because it's clear in your head doesn't mean it's clear for anyone else.

14. Be Explicit About Your Desired Outcome

It's stunning to consider how many hours are wasted in meetings that are essentially about nothing and get nothing done. There's a big difference between activity and productivity. Just because you're busy doesn't mean you're creating value. When meeting with others, begin with the end in mind. What do you want to accomplish? The clearer you are, the more focused (and productive) you will be.

15. Do Proficient Work

It may come as a blinding flash of the obvious, but to build Competence Trust, it helps to be competent. Make sure you're proficient in all aspects of your work. For example, if you have to speak in front of groups, and you're a third-rate speaker, it's going to weaken your leadership brand. Shore up any weaknesses through development. Delegate or outsource any areas that are irreparably subpar. If you're not sure where your strengths and weaknesses are, go out and get some feedback.

16. Start Meetings Promptly and End Meetings On Time

There's no law that says that a 10:00 am meeting has to wait to start until 10:07. If you said you will start at 10:00 am, start at 9:59 and sixty seconds. As a leader, you get the behavior you tolerate. Starting late sends the message that it's okay to be sloppy around here. On the back end, remember that everyone has busy lives, and your meeting isn't the only thing in their world. End your meetings on time. Starting and ending on time sends a clear message that you have clear boundaries, and that you respect and value others.

17. Own Your Accountabilities

Being an intentional leader doesn't mean that you're always perfect. Sometimes, things will go wrong. When they do, and it's your mistake, don't go placing blame everywhere else. Own the error. Who would you trust more: the person who points the finger, or the person who says "It's my fault"? Case closed.

18. Fix Your Mistakes

After you've owned your mistake (see #17), find a way to make things right. People don't want excuses; they want solutions. When mistakes happen, you have the opportunity to show others your commitment to making sure they are satisfied. The customer service industry calls this moment "service recovery". You're at the point where you have the opportunity to build even greater trust and loyalty. It all depends on how you go about making things right. (See #10.)

19. Show Up Prepared

If you're meeting with someone new, how can you get to know more about them in advance? Nothing says novice more than "I don't know anything about you. What do you do?" With the internet, there's no excuse for not doing your homework. Taking the time in advance to learn more about them sends a clear message that you care about them, their business, and doing high quality work.

20. Tailor Your Language

As a leader, you may find yourself in the situation of having to repeat the same message to multiple audiences. If you speak in generic terms, you're basically saying "I didn't care enough to get to know what you really do." Get to know each audience specifically, and tailor your examples and language so it speaks specifically to them. They'll be impressed and appreciative at the same time.

21. Play Fair

One of the rules of the school playground is "Play Fair". Nothing irks people like the sense that there are different sets of rules for different groups. Different sets of rules create in-groups and out-groups. You may think you're being helpful by giving someone a leg up, but even that person will ultimately respect you less because they know you play favorites. When you create or enforce rules or policies, consider the impact on the larger whole.

22. Proclaim Progress

The single greatest human motivator is making progress towards a meaningful goal. Conversely, when people keep working and working with no end in sight, it's incredibly demoralizing. Take time to publicly recognize (and celebrate) milestones as they are achieved. Doing so will put wind in the sails of those that you lead. In addition, you'll earn trust, because others will appreciate that you took the time to both notice and acknowledge their efforts.

Relational Trust

23. Show Esteem

People are not merely doers of tasks. Just like you, they have a rich inner humanity. Treat them with a fundamental level of respect. A client of mine takes all prospective new hires out to lunch for an interview. At lunch, he watches how the applicant interacts with the waiter. More than a few candidates never received a job offer. They're probably still wondering why.

24. Pay Attention

There's a reason we use the verb "pay" to describe what you do with your attention. Your attention is the most valuable resource you own. It's also the rarest. When you focus exclusively on someone else, your action tells them just how valuable you think they are. To have someone say "When they were with me, I felt like I was the only person in the room" is a compliment of the highest order.

25. Listen

Do you hear others, or do you listen to them? There's a goal to the act of listening: understanding. Understanding is the ability to see something the way someone else sees it. Don't listen so you can respond. Listen to learn a different perspective. Can you be present, withhold judgment and be open all at the same time? Deep listening is one of the most powerful ways to build connection and trust.

26. Ask Great Questions

Dale Carnegie once wrote, *“If you want to be interesting, be interested.”* Nothing is more effective at creating interest than being a great questioner. Ask open-ended questions: questions that can’t be answered with a yes or no. Draw out the other person. An easy way to do this is to use the TED method:

Tell me about...

Explain how...

Describe how...

Ask a question. Then, let them talk.

27. Monotask

You might think you’re being more efficient by processing your email in the middle of a meeting, but in fact, all you’re doing is multiple things poorly. Multitasking is a myth. Human brains are linear, not sequential. Science has spoken: you’re wired to only be able to do one thing at a time. What you think is multitasking is actually just task shifting. Your task shifting (and resulting distraction) upsets the people around you. Your behavior is saying “You’re only worth about 30% of my attention.”

28. Make Eye Contact

In North American culture, the social norm is to look at someone in the eyes when relating to them. This doesn’t have to turn into a staring contest; you can look away occasionally as you gather your thoughts. However, if your eyes are darting and wandering and you never make eye contact, they’ll think something is wrong. If looking directly in their eyes makes you uncomfortable, you can look at their face right between their eyebrows; it’ll appear that you’re making eye contact.

29. Eliminate Distractions

Create an environment that is conducive to giving others your total focus. A guiding principle for this is: **Avoidance is easier than resistance.** For example, it's a lot easier for you not to look at your laptop screen if your laptop is closed and put away. Design the optimal environment in advance. If you know you need to listen intently to what will be said, don't schedule your lunch meeting at a noisy restaurant.

30. Restate What You Heard

Listening well takes a lot of energy. Even when you aspire to total understanding, there's a good chance you're going to miss something or get it wrong. When you restate what you heard back to the speaker, you'll accomplish two things:

1. It's a way for you to confirm that you understood accurately.
2. It's a way for the speaker to explicitly know that you got complete understanding.

When it's clear that you "got it", they'll feel that you "got" them.

31. Lean In...Literally

Your body language says a lot about you. When you physically lean into the conversation, you send the message that you're interested, involved, and care. If this seems too subtle, do an experiment the next time you attend one of your regular meetings. Look around the meeting room at the body language of the participants. What are people *really* saying?

32. Be Curious

In each conversation, make it your goal to learn something new. Taking on the attitude of a learner is a great way to energize and build relationship. The author Thomas Friedman created a useful non-mathematical formula: $[CQ + PQ > IQ]$ where CQ is "curiosity quotient" and PQ is "passion quotient", which, added together is greater than IQ "intelligence quotient". How curious are you?

33. Don't Check Your Watch

Have you ever had the experience of talking to someone at a party, and being dumped for someone else in the middle of a conversation? It's no fun. When you look at your watch, you send the message that there's somewhere else that you'd rather be. If you know that you'll be up against a time deadline, be proactive and state upfront how much time you have. That way, you can enlist others to keep things on schedule.

34. Show Empathy

Everyone has feelings. Are you sensitive to the feelings of others? Are you comfortable responding to their feelings? Empathy is a hallmark of emotional intelligence, and helps to create psychological safety. When people feel safe, they sense they can bring all of themselves to the conversation. This is in sharp contrast to the common workplace "check your feelings at the door" policy. The reality is that no one ever *checks* their feelings at the door. They just *suppress* their feelings at the door. Your ability to empathize sets the tone for how welcome people fully feel.

35. When It Comes To Detail, Think Goldilocks

In *The Story of the Three Bears*, Goldilocks liked things “just right”. Not too much, and not too little. When you communicate with others, be like Goldilocks when it comes to the amount of detail. What are your default tendencies? Know yourself. Do you tend to live in the weeds of countless details? Are you so conceptual that people are left needing more? Consider your style, and consider who you’re talking with. Then, adjust your approach as necessary. They’ll be glad you did.

36. Out Your Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs that we hold as true without proof. We make assumptions all day long; if we didn’t we wouldn’t be able to function in the world. However, where we get into trouble is when we confuse our assumptions for the absolute truth. When working with others, be explicit about what you know is true and what you think is true. Do an assumption check. It’s a good way to see if all parties are aligned on what they actually believe.

37. Say Thank You

It seems so simple, yet expressing gratitude is often overlooked in the hustle and bustle of our daily lives. Who do you appreciate? Have you told them? Pick your medium of choice, and then share your thanks. At our core, all humans have two huge needs: the need to be seen and the need to be valued. An act of appreciation is one of the most direct ways to address both of these needs at the same time. An added bonus: Not only will they feel happier when they receive the thank you, you’ll feel happier in the act of saying or writing it.

38. Share (or Give) the Credit

Nowadays, most of work is a team sport. Who else had a hand in creating your win? Everyone has the need to be seen and the need to be valued. (See #37.) Remembering to share or give credit is a powerful way to make people feel appreciated and build trust. On the flip side, stealing the credit for someone else's work is a sure path to making lifelong enemies.

39. Stay in Touch

Relationships are like gardens: they need to be cultivated. If you leave them alone for too long, they start to wither. Plan to touch base on a consistent basis. Depending on the relationship, the frequency could be daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly. When you stay in touch, you become thought of as someone who can be counted on to show up.

40. Keep Calm and Then Respond

Emotionally intelligent notice their feelings; they're just not ruled by them. If you find yourself agitated about something, make the time and space to calm down before trying to respond or sort it out with someone else. Your neuroanatomy needs a cool down period. If you don't cool off, you won't be able to think in a rational and useful way. No one has ever reflected back on a leader they admired and said "I love how much they used to rage at our team when the pressure was on."

41. Separate Facts from Opinions

When working with other people, you'll eventually hit conflict. Great leaders know how to deal with disagreements. One valuable tool is to separate out the facts (data) from opinions (judgment). There's a big difference between saying "You arrived at our meeting twenty minutes late" and "You don't care about our team." If you arbitrarily mix up your facts and opinions, you'll alienate those around you and lose their trust.

42. Create a Constructive Feedback Culture

Many people have had negative experiences with feedback. The word feedback should not be confused with “license to be ruthlessly honest with you.” The goal of feedback is to learn and get better. To do that, the climate has to be one of openness, caring and trust. The best way to get the feedback ball rolling in the right direction is to ask for feedback from those around you. When you model being receptive to feedback, you send the signal that we’re all works-in-progress, committed to continuous improvement.

43. Share Information

When you come across something interesting or valuable, stop and ask yourself “Who else might benefit from this information? We live in a world where people have too much information and not enough insight. By thoughtfully choosing valuable pieces of information to share and passing them along, you add value to those around you. Your reputation as a thought leader grows in the process, too.

44. Don’t Interrupt

Nothing says “You’re not that important” like cutting people off in mid-sentence. Patience may be a virtue, but it’s a prerequisite for any aspiring leader. Even if you already know what someone else is going to say, finishing their sentences damages the bond between the two of you. If this is a challenging skill for you, focus on your breathing while they’re talking. Let them finish what they are trying to say.

45. Build Rapport from Common Ground

Like it or not, people feel a stronger affinity for people who are similar to them. As you develop relationships, look for what you have in common. Are you from the same place? Did you go to the same school? Do you have similar aged kids? Do you root for the same sports teams? Finding these connections builds the bond between you. They'll like you and trust you more.

46. Speak About People As Though They Are In the Room

Great leaders are dependable. They consistently take the high road. They speak the same about someone whether they are present or absent. They avoid gossip. Gossip is trivial, petty, and will completely derail teamwork and trust. There's absolutely no benefit for a leader to engage in gossip. If you're willing to speak poorly about someone who's absent today, you'll be seen as someone who is willing to speak poorly about anyone else tomorrow.

47. Be Precise With Praise

We all like to be recognized. However, some recognition has more impact than others. For example, notice how you might feel if your leader said to you:

Thanks for your great work on the project.

Now notice how you might feel if you hear this instead:

Thank you for being so persistent in continually following up with the client to make sure they were always taken care of. Your rapport building skills were instrumental in us landing this new business.

Both instances of praise may have had the same intention. However, the second example has monumentally more impact. When it comes to giving praise, details count.

48. Tell Well-Thought-Out Stories

Storytelling is perhaps the most powerful form of human communication. When you tell a thoughtful story at work, you connect, inspire and teach at the same time. Storytelling allows the listener to actively engage with you during the telling. You can use your story to highlight a core value or the organizational culture. Unlike the thirty emails you deleted this morning, well-told stories will be remembered long after the telling has ended.

49. Snail Mail a Birthday Card

Who doesn't get warm feelings when receiving a birthday card in the mail? When you send someone a birthday card, the receiver can't help but connect you with the pleasurable emotions that come on their birthday. This happy connection helps build a stronger bond between the two of you. In addition, a handwritten card is so rare in our digital age that you'll be sure to stand out and get noticed.

50. Be Open-Minded and Flexible

The boxer Mike Tyson once said *"Everybody's got plans... until they get hit."* A challenge all leaders face at some point is to not get too attached to a particular outcome. As agendas and goals change, can you remain flexible and open to new ways of doing things? If you lock down and get overly rigid, you will push away others around you.

51. Be Other Focused

Leaders can fall into many classic leadership traps. Among the greatest are position, power and ego. For entrapped leaders, it's all about ME. Their people exist to serve them. Check in with your ego: Do you see your leadership as a chance to show off, or as a chance to serve a greater good? Do a pronoun check. How often do you say I/Me/Mine, and how often do you say Us/We/Ours?

Authentic Trust

52. Trust Others First

The first law of influence is the law of reciprocity. People will treat you the way you treat them. What is your core belief about trust? Does trust have to be earned? Is trust assumed? What you believe about trust will shape the way you interact with everyone. For those in the “trust must be earned” camp, starting with an assumption of trust can feel extremely risky. However, if you want to get trust, you’ll need to extend trust first. Leaders set the tone for trust by giving it first.

53. Be Vulnerable

Some people think that vulnerability demonstrates weakness. Nothing could be further from the truth. It actually takes a tremendous amount of strength and courage to be intentionally vulnerable. When you open up and reveal a personal flaw or challenge, others instantly connect to your humanity. You’ve suddenly made it safe for them to admit to having imperfections, and given them permission to more fully connect to their own humanity.

54. Ask For Support

Leaders are people, not superheroes. No one expects you to be perfect and do it all. Be willing to make requests for help. When you give someone the chance to support you, it draws the two of you closer. Giving support allows them to see that they have something of value to offer. At the same time, you benefit from their aid. Afterwards, when you appreciate them for their help, you both get the benefits that appreciation provides. (See #37.)

55. Be Transparent

We live and work in an age of transparency. With Yelp, Glassdoor, and other social media, we can get instant, unfiltered access to what people really think. There may be times that legal or ethical reasons mean you should keep things under wraps. If that's not the case, then share information honestly and openly with the people around you. Today's workforce does not want to work *for* you. They want to work *with* you. Keeping them in the loop reinforces their role as collaborative problem-solvers.

56. Be Genuine

Oscar Wilde once wrote *"Be Yourself. Everyone else is already taken."* There are no one-size-fits all cookie cutter approaches to successful leadership. To be both authentic and effective, it helps be self-aware. What are your strengths? What areas need improvement? You can't be intentional if you're not conscious. In this case, what you don't know *can* hurt you. Learn about yourself. Take the time to close the gap between your intentions and how others perceive you.

57. Stay True To Your Values

There are times where someone will ask you to do something that goes against your core beliefs of what's right. These times are moments of truth. It's in these moments that your leadership is tested. It takes integrity to know your values and courage to stand up for them, even when it's uncomfortable. Speaking up may be painful now, but what's the long-term cost of not speaking up?

58. Admit When You Don't Know

Sadly, too many leaders think part of their job description includes "Superhero". No one expects you to be all seeing and all knowing. There will be times when you don't know the answer. It's okay to say "I don't know". There's no point in tap dancing around the issue. If the situation warrants it, you can follow up with an offer to find out the answer and be back in touch.

Self-Trust

59. Schedule Your Priorities

Competence produces confidence. The way to build competence is to build habits that support the person you want to become. What are your priorities? For example, if you say that living a fit and energetic life is important to you, are you blocking out time for physical activity? Don't wait for inspiration to strike. Inspiration and willpower are highly overrated. Instead, create routines to automate the actions you want to turn into habits.

60. Reflect On Your Successes

There are plenty of places in your life where you've already achieved success. So why is it when you want to undertake something new, you completely forget about them? Keep a success journal. Review it periodically to remind you of how capable you actually are. You've already got a long track record of working hard and making progress towards achieving meaningful goals. Draw on previous achievements to fuel future performance.

61. Get Enough Sleep

It's hard to believe in yourself when you're sleep deprived. It turns out that 98% of the population needs at least 7-8 hours of sleep a night in order to function well. If you're getting less, you're diminishing your cognitive capacity and adversely affecting your mood. You may also be getting sick a whole lot more than you need to. At a physiological level, sleep is more important than food. If you're not getting enough sleep, ask yourself "What am I doing with my time that is more important than healthy rest?"

62. Be Resilient

Bad stuff happens. To everyone. When bad stuff happens to you, how do you respond? Do you take it personally? Do you play the victim card? Do you see it as an opportunity to learn and get stronger? How you deal with adversity says a lot about who you are. Resilience isn't about being stoic and suffering in silence. It's the ability to recover quickly. Get the help you need to get back to full speed.

63. Take a Stand

Let people know your opinion. Have the courage of your convictions. In the course of your work life, not everyone will agree with you on every decision. That's okay. In fact, it's much better than the alternative: wishy-washiness. Don't be like the politician Aaron Burr, of whom is said in the musical *Hamilton*, "If you stand for nothing, Burr, what'll you fall for?"

64. Be Passionate

Passion is infectious. When you see someone who's passionate, they draw you in. You want to trust them. If you want more passion, look in the mirror. What gets you fired up to get out of bed in the morning? What really matters to you? Who really matters to you? When you connect to a greater sense of purpose, you bring a ton more energy to what you do. When you connect to your passion, you'll have more confidence that you're going down the right track.

65. Give without Expectations

Expectations create pressure. They force your mind to think "If I do this, what will I get back?" Next time, try this approach. Ask yourself what things would be like if you let go of getting anything back? What if you gave just to share joy? What if you gave just to be of help to someone else? When you give from a place of no attachment, you'll feel more expansive. That's because you'll have connected to the trust that comes with abundance. It's the feeling that there's more than enough.

66. Never Give Up

Trust is built on the idea that relationships are designed for the long-term. In all relationships, there will be ups and downs. Anyone can steer the ship when the sea is calm. It's when the waves are rough that leaders are tested. Don't give up on yourself, and don't give up on your team. You have lots of tools to help you. Remember #58: Ask For Support. When people look back on their greatest experiences, they don't remember the easy stuff. They recall their greatest challenges, the times they were tested and made it through.

Conclusion

Congratulations! You're on your way. Building trust can only pay dividends in every dimension of your life.

A few final thoughts:

Some of these actions will reap instant rewards. Others will take time to bear fruit. But it's worth the effort. Trust can't be created instantly. It takes dedication over the long haul. As you proceed, remember how fragile trust can be. If you're not careful, years of your work can be destroyed by a few thoughtless actions.

Success may take time and effort. You may be challenged along the way. Don't give up. The benefits are so much greater than the costs. When you build your leadership on a foundation of trust, you don't just improve results. You improve lives.

I'd love to hear your trust-building challenges and success stories. And, if you have additional trust building actions steps, please send them along. You can email me at alain@alainhunkins.com.

Now get out and get building.

About the Author

ALAIN HUNKINS has spent the last twenty years building stronger leaders and organizations.

Alain's clients include 42 of the Fortune 100 companies. He's designed and delivered programs on leadership development to over 1500 groups in 19 different countries.

Alain has a breadth of experience, working with every major industry. Leadership topics include teambuilding, conflict management, communication, peak performance, innovation, engagement, company culture and change.



As a sought-after workshop leader, Alain serves as faculty for future**think**, The Energy Project, Eagle's Flight, and Duke Corporate Education.

Alain is also a prolific writer, having published over 350 articles on leadership. His writing has been read by thousands of readers worldwide. Archives of his posts can be accessed at <http://www.alainhunkins.com/blog.html>. He can be reached at alain@alainhunkins.com

Some of Alain's most popular posts include:

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