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Trust Leadership: Engage Employees And Skyrocket Performance

For a year that was supposed to hold such economic promise, it certainly didn't deliver. The way I see it, we have two options: become paralyzed by circumstances or adapt.

While there is much to consider in a down economy, let's boil it down to basics. Before you do anything else, you need to gauge your trust leadership by asking yourself, "Do my employees trust me and the company's leaders?" To assume the answer is "yes" does you no good, so be honest. Want the truth? Look closely at your company's culture.

So how do you know if you've developed leadership trust? Well, do you live by the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you? More important, would your employees agree? Because guess what? To inspire loyalty and trust in others, you have to be trustworthy and loyal!

Seems simple enough, right? With hidden political agendas lurking everywhere, it's often easier said than done.

Our culture screams, "Win at all costs!" But if you look at the *100 Best Companies to Work For*, you find people-focused cultures, and it's these environments that promote positive bottom lines. In fact, I recently read *Corporate Culture and Performance* by **Kotter and Heskett**, and it revealed the following:

Over an 11-year period, companies that emphasized all stakeholders – employees, customers and stockholders, and focused on leadership development grew four times faster. They also found that these companies had job creation rates seven times higher, had stock prices that grew twelve times faster and profit performance that was 750 times higher than companies that did not have shared values and adaptive cultures.

The evidence is clear and compelling. Companies that foster a climate of mutual trust and respect reap significant benefits.

If you're not sure how to inspire loyalty and trust or determine if your company has it, here are five simple behaviors to put you on the right track:

☆ **Demonstrate uncompromising integrity:** Your trustworthiness is measured daily against your words and actions.

- ☆ **Make and meet commitments:** If your firm treats commitments as promises and delivers results without follow-up, you'll build tremendous esprit de corps.
- ☆ **Be direct and forthright:** Let people know where they stand and what and when things are needed. If you're micromanaging, you need to delegate more effectively and strengthen trust and accountability.
- ☆ **Slow down:** Make sure people understand what's being asked of them. If it takes a little extra time, it's worth it. When employees understand the "why" behind requests, you empower them to provide solutions.
- ☆ **Open the door:** Trust is built one-on-one and eye-to-eye, not via e-mail. The "open door" may be an old policy, but it goes a long way toward helping everyone get their jobs done.

At the end of the day, accountability and results are what it's all about. Those who achieve goals, meet commitments, and treat people fairly along the way should play important roles in your firm. Those who continually disappoint fail to deliver, or lie should be let go.

Be honest and ask yourself: As a leader, are you continuously building a culture of loyalty and trust in your organization? ■ **IPA**