Organizational Trust

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Organizational trust is largely an intangible attribute, but it's critical to success. An organization with high levels of trust among its employees means that employees feel secure. It means that employees are confident that others in the company will do what they say. It means that employees have faith that their managers and peers will be honest and fair.

High trust organizations don't have to rely as much on management controls and supervision as low trust organizations. When trust is low, management typically employs extensive controls that track activities — from time spent on breaks to the number of parts assembled to the number of sales calls made. When trust is low, management closely monitors and supervises its employees. When trust is low, energy that might have been spent on serving customers or adding real value to the organization is spent on controls that add no direct value.

Stephen M. R. Covey, the son of Dr. Stephen R. Covey who wrote the best selling book "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," refers to these controls and their costs as the "trust tax." A low trust culture requires management overhead that costs an organization time and money.

On the other hand, high trust organizations enjoy many benefits. A high trust organization is characterized by employees who accept responsibility for their actions. They feel safe that if they do their best, they will be treated fairly and with respect. They don't need controls or supervision to motivate them to perform. Instead, they perform because they are driven internally to do so. They feel an implicit contract with the organization that they will live by organization values.

To have a high trust culture, employees at all levels in the organization need to be trustworthy. To be trustworthy, you and your employees must be:

1) Honest: Honesty and integrity are the foundation of trust. If you are not honest, you can't be trusted.

2) Competent: You may be honest and people may like you, but if you are not competent, they can't trust you to do the work you were hired to perform.

3) Authentic: If people don't know the real you, they will naturally be suspicious.

4) Responsible: If you are unwilling to be accountable for achieving your objectives or completing assignments, you can't be trusted.

5) Self Driven: For you to be trustworthy, you must be conscientious of your work quality, your reputation, your follow-through and your responsiveness.

6) Caring: You must be a team player, willing to give your time and energy to the improvement of the organization and to those around you.