PERSOL**KELLY**
CONSULTING

BUILDING
TRUST
– THE KEY TO A
SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATION

The issue of trust between employees and their organisations have always been an interesting study amongst scholars and researchers in organisational behaviours.

Rousseau et al (1998) defined trust as 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another'.[1]

This means that employees who place a high level of trust in their senior management are really taking a risk in entrusting their current wellbeing and future livelihood to them. This also means, employees expect their organisation to show interest in their welfare while not forgetting the goals of the organisation.

As an important part of the organisation, employees' perception of trust is in internal processes, which go a long way in determining their productivity.

There are a series of issues that might influence the level of trust that employees have on the organisation as a whole. These issues often range from compensation packages to the physical working environment. Although the environment may not necessarily impact on the employees' perception of trust in the organisation, environmental conditions that indicate a lack of care on the part of employers (office décor, furniture, office space etc.) might create a feeling of distrust in the organisation.

Reference:
[1] Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust.
Academy of Management Review, 23(2), 383–404.

WHY IS TRUST IMPORTANT?

Establishing trust with employees is key for any successful organisation. The reason for this is not far-fetched; organisational success is often attributed to the work of its employees. Therefore, if they are not convinced that they can trust their organisation on managing and handling important issues, employees may become less motivated; hence, less productive; in turn, sabotaging the management's efforts to get the organisation to the top of the ladder.

Organisations need their employees to trust them so as to stay ahead of their competitors. As noted by Karriker and Williams (2009), organisations may be able to maintain their competitive advantage by managing employees effectively and seeking out techniques that promote trust and minimise resistance to change.[2] Since an organisation's survival and ultimate success are indirectly hinged on outwitting their competitors, maintaining their employees' trust will help retain talent and ensure employees' loyalty to their organisation.

While it is not possible for all employees to have total trust in their organisation, it is still better for employers and senior management to continually build on the level of their employees' trust in them.

OPEN COMMUNICATION

One of the most effective ways of earning employees' trust is to embark on a process of effective communication. Robert Rogers, President of DDI Consulting, maintained that building an environment of trust begins with an open communication.[3]

Opening up an effective line of communication between the organisation and employees is a good way of winning their trust. Listening to employees' grievances and reservations, while responding with empathy will impress on employees that they are being listened to. This helps employees understand that the organisation and its leaders understand what it means to be in their shoes, boosting their morale in the process.

Further, it is equally important for organisations to be very diplomatic when discussing poor performances with its employees. Rather than merely criticising the individual, it is better to be specific by laying out facts. It is also good to communicate how such employees need to position themselves to boost their performance; hence, encouraging greater levels of trust from both sides.

BUILD TRUST WITHIN A TEAM

For organisations to enjoy an increased level of trust from their employees, it is necessary to build trust among team members. It is important to maintain the self-esteem of each employee at various levels by reminding them of their importance to their team's success and by extension, their organisation's success.

Team leaders should be encouraged to consciously establish an avenue for praise and support for all employees to build an interdependence based on trust for one another. Encouraging members to be bold enough to stand up for one another in times of crisis also builds stronger camaraderie.

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There will be times when unfulfilled or changing promises will lead to reduced levels of employees' trust. It is important for organisations to seek ways to rebuild such lost trust. Communicating reasons for the broken trust and admitting to mistakes, if necessary, will more often than not lead to damage control; thus, allowing the affected employees to give the leadership another chance to redeem themselves. When this is done, the lost trust can then be gradually developed again.

Reference:
[2] Karriker, J. H., & Williams, M. L. (2009). Organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior: A mediated multifoci model. Journal of Management, 35(1), 112–135.

[3] Rogers, R. W., & Riddle, S. (2006). The Catalyst: Trust in the Workplace