

2011

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Sweeney, Patrick J.; Dirks, Kurt T.; Sundberg, David C.; and Lester, Paul B., "Trust *The Key to Leading When Lives Are on the Line*" (2011). *US Army Research*. 356.

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CHAPTER 9

Trust

The Key to Leading When Lives Are on the Line

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The Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was called in to assist the bureau's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team in Memphis to apprehend a married couple wanted on drug trafficking charges. The fugitive couple and an adult son, all with criminal records, were believed to be living in trailers in a mountain valley where outsiders would be easily noticed. The fugitives were known to stockpile weapons and had vowed never to be taken alive by law enforcement. Thus the FBI considered them to be armed and extremely dangerous.

Two HRT snipers along with two SWAT snipers were given the mission of positively identifying the fugitives and providing security and containment for the assault force. The snipers would have to travel several kilometers through wooded, mountainous terrain using night vision goggles (NVGs). The SWAT snipers did not have nighttime, overland movement capability, which is why HRT was brought in.

The HRT leader and his partner, nicknamed Felix, had gone through HRT selection and had served together all around the world, in the process establishing complete trust in each other. They had never met the two SWAT snipers. The HRT leader, being familiar with SWAT training, believed that the SWAT snipers were expert marksman who would be highly effective once at the objective, but they lacked training in extended overland movement with NVGs. As a consequence, the HRT leader created two sniper teams, each consisting of one HRT and one SWAT sniper to mitigate the SWAT snipers' lack of NVG training and to promote teamwork.

The HRT leader knew that he needed to quickly earn the trust of the SWAT snipers because any hesitation in following directives during the

mission could affect mission success and the safety of the team. The leader asked Felix to train the SWAT snipers on the use of NVGs and to give them a detailed mission brief to demonstrate the competence of the HRT members. The HRT leader encouraged the SWAT snipers to ask questions and offer suggestions concerning the mission.

The HRT leader's plan for the operation was to move by vehicle along the ridgeline above the valley where the fugitives lived and then move by foot with NVGs down the mountain to the fugitives' trailers. Once at the objective, the HRT-SWAT sniper teams would take up separate positions to have a 360-degree view of the objective area. Once the fugitives were positively identified, the HRT leader would notify the assault team, and the snipers would provide security and containment.

The HRT team pushed out from their staging area at midnight during a lightning storm that reduced visibility to just a few meters. The heavy rain made travel on the dirt trail leading to the ridge slow and hazardous. Several hundred meters from the top of the draw, the vehicles slid off the road into a swollen creek. The HRT leader gathered the men and equipment, made a change to the plan, and got the team moving again toward the draw. The leader placed Felix in the lead because he trusted his ability to navigate and control movement. The HRT leader traveled third in the file followed by his SWAT partner in the fourth position to provide rear security. Their movement was slow due to limited NVG visibility caused by the heavy rain.

From the top of the draw, the team descended the heavily wooded slope and NVG visibility deteriorated to only a few feet. The team's ability to see completely vanished during the lightning flashes. NVG movement under these conditions challenged the experienced HRT snipers and made it extremely difficult for the less-experienced SWAT snipers. The trees were so thick and visibility so low that Felix's SWAT partner had to place his hand on Felix's backpack so he did not lose his way.

HRT reached their objective rally point under the cover of darkness. The storm was still raging. The leader sent Felix and his SWAT partner forward to conduct reconnaissance of the objective and movement routes to final positions. They returned twice because flooding and deadfalls along the route prevented them from completing the reconnaissance. The team leader gave the SWAT snipers the mission of monitoring the satellite radio and providing security while he and Felix moved forward to locate the objective. After finding the objective, Felix and the leader returned to link up with the SWAT snipers just as it was starting to get light.

The team leader realized that it was not possible to move the sniper teams into the planned positions because the flooding and the sunrise greatly increased the chances of compromise. The leader had to quickly change the plan. Felix and his partner would move to the right side of the

objective to provide cover and containment, and the leader and his partner would move to the rear of the objective to identify the fugitives. The new positions required the team members to assume additional risk because they were closer to the fugitives' trailers than originally planned. The leader's trust in his SWAT partner's training was justified when the sniper built a good, concealed position and set up effective observation of the target allowing the leader to focus on making additional changes to the plan if necessary and reporting to the operations center.

The dawn revealed a dismal rainy day. The fugitives started to move around after daybreak, relieving themselves outside their trailers. After three hours of intense observation, the team was able to positively identify all fugitives. The command post was notified and the assault team started maneuvering toward the objective.

The assault phase was a tense and critical part of the HRT mission because the sniper team had to keep the assault element informed about the location and activities of fugitives and be ready to take action if the assault element was compromised. The assault element stealthily moved their vehicles to the top of the drive leading onto the property. The assault team swept down on the objective while the HRT and SWAT snipers provided security. The fugitives were completely surprised and tried to run, but were quickly apprehended by the well-trained agents. The search of the trailers revealed assault rifles stacked by the doors. Fortunately, a well-planned and executed mission never gave the fugitives the opportunity to make a last stand.

TRUST AND LEADERSHIP

The sniper scenario highlights the important link between group members' trust in their leader and the leader's ability to influence them to willingly risk their lives to achieve the team's mission. Here "trust" means the willingness to assume vulnerability to the actions of another group member (leader, subordinate, or peer) based on a sense of confidence in that group member.¹ For example, during the sniper mission, the team members' trust in the HRT leader allowed them to follow him throughout the mission even when changes in the plan required them to assume additional risk. A study of soldiers serving in Iraq found that trust was necessary and essential for a leader to exercise influence in combat. Soldiers, who trusted their leaders, allowed them a greater degree of influence regarding their readiness to follow directives and motivation to perform duties to complete the mission.² This scenario and research point to trust being the psychological mechanism that provides group members with a sense of security

to assume the risks associated with following leaders in dangerous contexts. Group members' willing acceptance of their leaders' influence represents true and impactful leadership, not mere compliance. Trust is a foundation of effective leadership across almost every type of organization and circumstance.³

Leaders tend to give trusted group members more opportunities to provide input about decisions and greater latitude to perform their duties.⁴ For example, during the planning phase of the sniper mission, the HRT leader's trust in the SWAT members influenced him to seek their input. Group members who earn the trust of their peers possess a greater ability to exercise influence within the group. These trusted peers emerge as informal leaders who can significantly influence the morale, cohesion, and effectiveness of the group. Thus, to exercise influence within a group, one must first earn the trust of its members. Mutual trust between group members, especially leaders and subordinates, enhances mutual influence, which increases organizational effectiveness.⁵

Results from the aforementioned study conducted in Iraq also found that soldiers who did not trust their leaders would not willingly follow their directives, would question orders, and complied with orders only after taking actions to assume the absolute minimum risk. A lack of soldiers' faith in leaders' directives and elevated concern about personal safety put unit members' lives and mission accomplishment at risk. As one artillery gunner succinctly stated, "If you cannot trust your leader, you are going to have doubts about your safety as well as the safety of your fellow soldiers. You will not perform 100 percent for your leader if there is not trust."⁶

In a team, trust is the adhesive that bonds people, allowing them to work cooperatively to achieve a higher purpose or mission. The bonds of trust among group members fuel a commitment to stay connected, protect and promote the welfare of group members (even at the risk of personal cost, including one's life), and fulfill the group's purpose and mission.⁷ Trust is a foundation on which cohesion and cooperation in organizations is built. One example of such cooperative action is when a soldier, firefighter, law enforcement officer, or medical professional risks his or her life to protect a fellow group member or complete a mission. To summarize, trust is important to leadership because it determines the amount of influence leaders exercise and also creates the bonds that encourage people to work cooperatively to achieve a common purpose or mission. In short, trust is necessary and essential for the exercise of influence within a group.

Assessing Trust

Although it is useful for leaders to accurately grasp the extent to which they are trusted, it can be difficult to ascertain in practice. There are a number of informal gauges and cues at the disposal of leaders for assessing the extent to which others willingly make themselves vulnerable to another's leadership. For example, one might consider the quality of communications, followers' desire for openness, and their willingness to exercise initiative.

Regarding communications, if followers trust their leader, they will provide him or her with candid, timely, and complete information that usually includes their personal thoughts and reactions.⁸ Group members do not hesitate to share good and bad news, potential issues within the organization, and their candid input on the possible causes of problems and potential actions to resolve them. In such a relationship, the leader will not be blindsided by unresolved issues or group members' perceptions.

Followers are more likely to seek openness in their relationship with a leader when they trust that leader. For example, some followers take advantage of informal opportunities to engage their leader about work as well as non-work-related topics. During such interactions, followers are likely to share personal information (e.g., family history and activities, career goals, hobbies, and so on) and try to get to know the leaders as people. In leader-follower relationships characterized by trust, group members do not feel the need to rely on standard policies and procedures to protect themselves from their leaders' actions, so their relationships are more open and less formal.⁹

The willingness of followers to exercise initiative in performing their duties or bettering the organization is another potential indicator of their trust in leaders. Group members who trust their leader fulfill his or her directives without resistance and complete tasks beyond minimal expectations. Members feel safe in taking risks and making mistakes to exceed the leader's expectations or improve the organization because confident leaders use setbacks to facilitate growth.

THE IROC TRUST DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Trust develops through reciprocal cycles in which each person in the relationship acts in a cooperative and competent manner to reduce the other's anxiety or fear of exploitation and to reveal the potential rewards for staying in the relationship. The mechanism that drives the trust cycle is a person's willingness to assume some degree of risk related to the other's action. For instance, leaders who empower their followers with the freedom of action to do their

jobs are assuming a degree of vulnerability, thus communicating to the group members their trust. If the followers perform their duties in a competent and cooperative manner, thus upholding the leader's expectation of their ability to complete their duties without much supervision, the leader is more likely to assume a greater degree of vulnerability in the future. Each time the leader and group members assume risk through dependence on one another and the choice is validated through results, the trust in the relationship deepens.¹⁰

We introduce here the IROC trust development model, which focuses on the influence of the individual, the relationship, the organization, and the context in creating and sustaining trust (Figure 9.1). The individual fac-

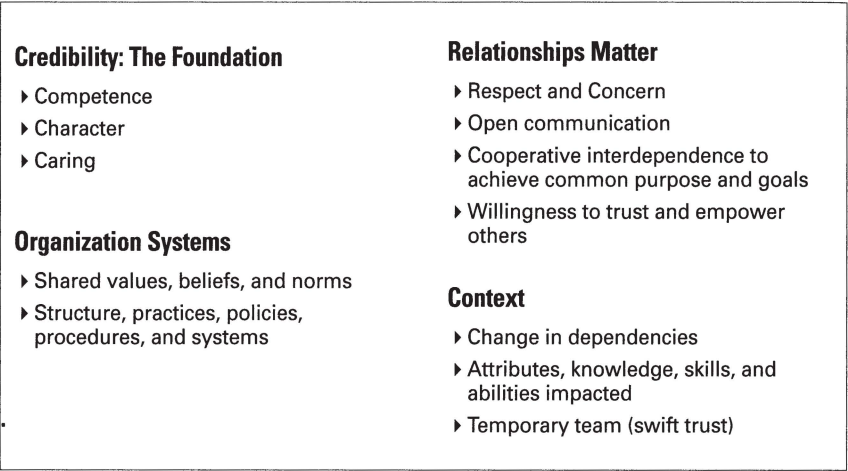


FIGURE 9.1 The individual-relationship-organization-context (IROC) trust development model

tor addresses the knowledge, skills, abilities, and character traits leaders need to develop to fulfill their leadership duties. The relationship factor touches on leader actions needed to create the positive relationships required to function in dangerous contexts. The organization factor considers how unit culture, structure, policies, procedures, and practices set climate, which affects the individual and relationship factors. The context factor focuses on how environment can influence the nature of dependencies in relationships as well as members' psychological needs. The IROC trust development model assists leaders in organizing their thoughts about trust and provides them with a systematic means of creating interventions to enhance trust and a means for predicting how events or behaviors might impact trust.¹¹

The Individual Factor

Followers place their trust in leaders based on the stable characteristics that define who the leaders are as people. Team members want leaders who are highly competent, display good character, and care about followers' and the group's well-being.¹² If group members can attribute leaders' competence, character, and caring to stable dispositional characteristics, then they have confidence in the leaders' ability to ensure future success of the group while at the same time protecting their welfare, which leads to trust. It is important that leaders possess these three attributes and that they find authentic ways for followers to recognize this.

Competence. In dangerous contexts, perceived leader competence is the dominant factor in the development of trust with group members because it plays a pivotal role in mission accomplishment and also in protecting members.¹³ Competence entails a leader's decision-making abilities, domain and organizational knowledge, and stress-management skills. Group members must believe the leader possesses the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to accomplish the mission and protect their welfare.

The leader's primary function is to make decisions to ensure efficient use of resources to accomplish the unit's mission and to protect the followers' interests. Group members depend on their leaders' expertise and judgment to plan and execute operations that successfully complete the mission with the least possible risk to followers' lives. Thus, a dangerous context leader must have the intellect and domain expertise—understanding the capabilities of equipment and people and how best to employ them—to plan operations to efficiently accomplish assigned missions while anticipating possible contingencies and adaptations. For instance, in the sniper scenario, the team leader made quick adjustments to the movement plan when the insertion vehicle slid off the road prior to the designated insertion point.

One of the competencies unique to dangerous contexts is the importance of leaders' stress-management skills. Leaders' ability to effectively manage stress facilitates their ability to focus attention, process information, and make sound decisions in dynamic and dangerous situations. Equally important, leaders' composure under stress can bolster their followers' confidence that the group can effectively handle the situation, which reduces stress within group members.¹⁴ For instance, in the sniper scenario, the leader's ability to handle the stress and stay composed while navigating difficult terrain in a torrential rainstorm that required a change in plans helped keep the team composed, confident, and focused on the mission.

Character. A leader's character entails factors such as honesty in word and deed (integrity), physical and moral courage, sense of duty, and loyalty. Integrity is important for the development of trust because it provides followers with a sense of confidence that regardless of the situation, leaders will act in accordance with their and the organization's values and also lead by example. Leaders should identify and take advantage of opportunities to communicate and model their values (e.g., relating decision rationale to values). Leaders who lead in accordance with their values serve as good role models and provide the organization with clear moral and ethical boundaries within which to accomplish missions. In dangerous contexts, especially when deadly force must be used to accomplish the mission, these boundaries validate group members' moral purpose and sustain their will to complete the mission.

Honesty in communication builds trust while simultaneously enhancing group effectiveness. Subordinates undertake risky actions based on the information leaders provide them, thus they demand honest and candid information about the purpose of the operation and the dangers involved. Candid information creates an atmosphere of transparency, providing leaders and group members with an enhanced sense of security because it assists in reducing perceptions of hidden agendas and opens channels of communication.

Furthermore, open communications fulfill group members' psychological need for knowledge about a situation and the true purpose and desired end-state of an operation (the why). This information reduces group members' uncertainty, allows them to assess feasibility, and also provides them a reason for risking their well-being.¹⁵ Group members' understanding of the true purpose of an operation provides them a way to make meaning out of the trauma they might experience, which protects their mental health and fosters trust.¹⁶ If the team does not understand the mission's purpose or thinks it is dubious, members expect their leaders to press higher authorities for clarification or modification of the operation. Any indications that leaders are hiding the true purpose or desired end-state of an operation would result in a decrease in group members' level of trust in their leaders and the motivation to accomplish the mission.

Physical and moral courage are important elements in dangerous context leaders' character. Physical courage entails leaders perceiving risk, experiencing some level of fear, and willingly sharing the danger with group members while still performing their duties.¹⁷ As highlighted in Chapter 2 leaders' physical courage provides followers with a sense of confidence that no matter how dangerous the situation becomes, the leaders will be with them carrying out their duties, thus bolstering trust. It is important to note that in dangerous contexts, group members understand that leaders will experience fear, however,

they do not want them to show signs of it.¹⁸ As one infantry company fire support officer stated, “[L]eader courage is [important because] if you show your fear, no one will want to follow you into a situation where you are putting your lives on the line.”¹⁹ Leaders behaving in a courageous manner tend to provide their subordinates with good examples to follow, serve as sources of strength, and instill a sense of confidence that the situation is not as bad as they think and they will get through it.²⁰

Moral courage is important in earning trust because it provides leaders the strength of will to do the right thing, regardless of the situation and the cost they might incur. Put another way, moral courage is the willingness to incur risk in order to act in accordance with one’s values and to uphold one’s loyalty to followers and the unit by protecting their best interests. One example would be leaders’ willingness to confront headquarters to request modifications to missions they feel put their organizations at unnecessary risk. Subordinates trust leaders with strong moral courage because they can depend upon them to act with integrity and to support them in the most vulnerable situations.

It is important to remember that once trust in a leader’s character has been lost, it is difficult, if not impossible, to regain.²¹ Followers tend to see a leader’s character or integrity as being relatively stable over time. The stability of this perception and the fact that character is an assessment of the person’s essence makes it a prominent factor in building and maintaining trust in all relationships.

Caring. Care for followers is the second most important leader attribute that influences the development of trust in the dangerous context of combat. Soldiers believe that leaders who care about them will plan and execute missions with the least possible risk to their lives. Also, soldiers think that caring leaders will support them by representing their needs and interests to higher authorities and fighting to obtain necessary resources. This type of bond with leaders seems to provide group members with a sense of security because it helps address followers’ concerns about their safety.²²

This category of behavior embodies a leader’s concern for and desire to promote group members’ well-being, even at the cost to his or her self-interest. Leaders’ concern for group members’ welfare forms the basis for building mutual cooperation in the leader-subordinate relationship, which is essential for the establishment of trust.²³ Situations in which leaders must sacrifice their own self-interest to promote the welfare of their followers tests and demonstrates the depth of care for group members. This sacrifice can be as simple as giving up a couple of hours on the weekend to visit a group member in the

hospital or as complex as disobeying a directive in combat in order to protect the welfare of subordinates. The key is that the leader willingly incurs some cost to protect or promote the welfare of those that serve in the unit.

Where leaders spend their time indicates what they care about. Leaders who invest time in supporting, getting to know, listening to, and developing their group members are communicating to them that they are valued. One of the most powerful ways leaders can demonstrate their care for group members is to train them well. Tough, realistic training to standard, in which leaders participate, helps provide assurance that each individual and the group can accomplish assigned responsibilities. Other small investments of time leaders can leverage to demonstrate they care are writing thank you notes, conducting periodic counseling and mentoring sessions with members, publicly acknowledging and giving credit for group success to the members, walking around and visiting members daily to get to know them, sending them to school or for training even if it means a short-term decrement to the organization, helping them solve problems, and assisting them when they leave the organization.

To summarize, group members place trust in the characteristics of leaders that fall into the three categories of competence, character, and caring. Therefore, leaders should continuously strive to acquire domain knowledge and improve decision-making skills, develop their integrity by making daily decisions based on personal and organizational values, communicate the rationale behind decisions, and demonstrate care by investing their most precious resource, time, in the people they lead. These behaviors are associated with authentic and transformational leadership (individual consideration and idealized influence), which were discussed in Chapter 2.²⁴

The Relationship Factor

Trust is placed in an individual based on competence, character, and caring, but it develops within a relationship. The quality of the relationship can either facilitate or hinder the development of trust. Relationships characterized by respect, concern, open and honest communication, common purpose, and dependence upon (or vulnerability to) another person facilitates the development of trust.²⁵ This is especially true in leader-subordinate relationships because the characteristics of a good, quality relationship tend to reduce the perceived hierarchical power differential between the leader and team members, thus reducing fear and uncertainty and promoting cooperation.²⁶

Mutual Concern and Respect. As noted above, mutual concern and respect form the foundation for quality interpersonal relationships. From the leaders' perspective, the foundation for respect for followers rests in leaders'

assumption that group members possess potential to enrich the unit. Leaders who care about and view their followers as valued team members set the conditions for subordinates to reciprocate care and respect. When leaders and group members care about each other's welfare and respect each other, cooperation begins to flourish because it is in the best interest of all parties. Mutual concern and respect also serve to facilitate open communication.

Open Communication. To establish a positive relationship with team members, leaders should start by clearly communicating their expectations of followers and providing followers with an opportunity to communicate their expectations of leaders. Clarifying expectations reduces the potential for future conflict in relationships and synchronizes members' efforts regarding responsibilities and priorities. Seeking subordinates' input on the operations of the unit is the surest way to open channels of communication. Leaders who seek follower input are communicating their respect for team members, trust in their competence, and a willingness to be vulnerable.

Furthermore, to foster a climate of transparency, leaders should make an extra effort to share information about the organization's activities, upcoming requirements, rationale for decisions that affect the group, and changes in priorities and policies. Keeping group members informed provides them insight into leaders' intentions, prevents rumors, provides opportunities to potentially influence group outcomes, and allows members to prepare for future operations. Thus, open communication facilitates the development of trust because it clarifies leaders' and members' goals and intentions, demonstrates respect, and provides members the opportunity to exercise potential influence on leader actions.

Mutual Dependence to Achieve a Common Purpose. Group members depending on each other to obtain a common purpose or goal facilitates trust and cooperation within the group.²⁷ Group members know that the most efficient way to achieve a common purpose is for everyone to perform their individual duties and to work cooperatively with others.

Leaders should create opportunities to discuss with group members how shared dependencies in the group make them into a stronger team. They should also discuss how each member's role impacts others and contributes to accomplishing the organization's mission. This technique helps members understand the role and importance of their individual contributions to the team and its purpose. Members who understand the dependencies within the team gain greater insight into how they can influence the team and how other team members influence them.²⁸ In a combat context, soldiers' desire to uphold fellow unit members' dependencies and maintain their status in the

group are powerful motivating forces that encourage soldiers to face the dangers of combat and sustain them through the hardships of a tour.²⁹

For dangerous context leaders, the best means of demonstrating that they accept dependence on group members is to share hardships and dangers with them. Leaders who willingly go into harm's way and place their safety in the hands of their teammates powerfully communicate the shared interdependence within the group and also their trust. Group members depend on leaders to make good decisions to accomplish their mission while protecting their welfare. Leaders who are out front sharing in the group's hardships and dangers are able to better understand the situational demands and capabilities of the team and thus can make well-informed decisions in adapting to the dynamic nature of a situation. Furthermore, sharing hardship and dangers with team members communicates the leaders' confidence in themselves and the members to complete the mission and highlights their mutual dependence.³⁰

As an example of these points, in the sniper scenario the FBI SWAT snipers had to depend on the HRT leader to develop a plan to get them from the drop-off point to their watch positions safely and without compromise to achieve the common purpose of capturing the fugitive couple. The HRT leader had to depend on the SWAT snipers to provide security and surveillance for the assault element. The team leader was out front sharing the dangers of the movement in a lightning storm and the threat from the suspects at the objective. The willingness of the SWAT snipers and HRT leader to put their well-being in the hands of each other demonstrates the type of interdependence that facilitates cooperative behavior.

Willingness to Trust and Empower. To initiate the trust-building cycle with team members, leaders need to demonstrate their intention to trust followers.³¹ A simple way to empower subordinates is to give them the trust and freedom to do their jobs without micromanaging them. This begins with the leaders' assumption that their team members are capable and motivated to do well. Leaders should encourage them to take the initiative to solve problems on their own and should be willing to view mistakes as developmental opportunities. A good empowering technique is to provide followers with mission-type directives, which clearly state what task needs to be done, the purpose of the task regarding its impact on the organization, and the desired effects of the task that need to be achieved in terms of time, space, terrain, and outcomes. Mission-type directives empower subordinates to determine how to accomplish an assigned task by providing them a broad, flexible decision-making framework within which to work and adapt to dynamic situations.³² Also, group members'

participation in decision making enhances their commitment to the decisions. Leaders will hear group members discuss decisions as “we have decided” or “our decision is” versus “the leader has decided.”

In the sniper scenario, the officer in charge gave the HRT team leader two missions: to positively identify the fugitives before initiating the assault and to provide cover and containment for the assault team. In this situation, the sniper team leader was empowered to determine the best positions to accomplish the two missions, the movement plan, and the timetable. An understanding of the tasks (identify fugitives and provide cover and containment) and purposes (trigger to initiate assault and to protect assault members) provided the HRT sniper team leader the flexibility to adjust positions when the team encountered flooding at the objective.

To summarize, the quality of the relationship that leaders create with their followers matters in facilitating the development of trust. Therefore, dangerous context leaders are wise to invest time in developing quality relationships with each member of their team. Leaders should use authentic and transformational leadership (inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation) behaviors to build quality relationships.³³

The Organization Factor

Leaders should foster organizational behaviors and attributes that reinforce and support the characteristics of the relationship and individual factors.

Culture. An organization’s culture influences the development of trust throughout the group. Shared values and beliefs provide members with guidelines indicating what they need to hold themselves and others accountable, how members should interact, and the characteristics that define the organization. Culture also serves as an agent that brings people together to strive to uphold common values and beliefs about the organization and its purpose.³⁴ Thus, the organization’s culture has a powerful influence on members’ expectations regarding others and their own behavior. For example, in the sniper scenario the HRT leader had never met the two SWAT snipers who were joining his team; however, being familiar with the culture and training of elite units, such as SWAT, the leader reasonably believed he would find in the new members levels of competence and values similar to HRT.

Leaders might use a vision-development process, such as the one outlined by James Collins and Jerry Porras, to assist members to collectively discover, define, or reaffirm the core values and beliefs that define their organization.³⁵ Examples of organizational core values that foster the development of trust throughout an organization include respect, caring for people, loyalty, honesty

in word and deed (integrity), duty, courage, teamwork, and service to others. If all members of the organization support and hold themselves accountable to these values, then a peer, subordinate, or leader can reasonably expect that interactions with other members of the organization will be positive and within the framework of their values.

Structure, Policies, Procedures, and Practices. The systems used to run day-to-day operations can influence trust in relationships throughout an organization. The organization's structure, policies, procedures, and practices communicate the underlying assumptions about its values and members. Leaders should strive to ensure that organizational systems are congruent with espoused values and purpose, treat members fairly and with respect, and empower people to work cooperatively.

Leaders should strive to flatten the organizational structure as much as possible, clarify roles and scopes of authority, push decision making to the lowest level, reduce stovepipes that isolate elements, and ensure that subordinate elements do not have two bosses. Flat organizations, with unity of command and with multiple means for subordinate elements to share information, foster an open and cooperative climate that helps subordinate elements understand their dependencies on other elements, know what each one is doing to contribute to mission accomplishment, and coordinate efforts to create efficiencies, all of which serve to enhance trust within the organization.

Leaders should ensure that policies, procedures, and practices are fair, transparent, and promote cooperation. Indeed, fairness of procedures is one of the most powerful predictors of trust in leadership.³⁶ When making personnel assignments, leaders should consider existing unit cohesion and get input from subordinate leaders. The organization should have a socialization policy that assigns a sponsor to new personnel to assist them in integrating into the team. The criteria for promotions should be published and members counseled on their potential for advancement; all qualified members must be afforded equal opportunity. Organizations should use a collective reward system because individual reward systems tend to foster competition between group members that reduces cooperation and trust. A collective award system encourages members to work together to realize a common objective, which facilitates the development of trust.³⁷

Procedures and rationales for allocating requirements and resources should be transparent and have a mechanism that allows for subordinate leaders' input. Transparency in the allocation of resources and requirements provides members with an organizational perspective and bolsters perceptions of fairness, which facilitates cooperation and trust. Leaders should review

training policies to ensure that they maintain unit integrity as much as possible and also provide themselves the opportunity to participate in the actual training. Leaders should ensure that the organization has a system for sharing information and receiving feedback from group members on leaders' performance, the organization's performance, and ideas on how to improve both.

The Context Factor

The context within which a team operates will shape how the individual, relationship, and organization factors play out.

Changes in Dependencies. Dangerous contexts influence trust in relationships because they affect the nature of dependencies, which could impact members' psychological needs. Changes in dependencies in leader-subordinate relationships caused by the unique risks inherent in a dangerous context can trigger increased monitoring of and a shift in the importance individuals place on certain leader or follower characteristics perceived necessary to meet the new psychological needs, especially if one has no prior experience with the leader or group member in such a context.³⁸

From the group members' perspective, operating in a dangerous context requires them to significantly increase their dependence on leaders to protect their physical and mental well-being while accomplishing the assigned mission. Therefore, group members place great importance on their leaders' behavior and seek to verify that they possess such characteristics as competence, character, and caring, which help ensure their safety during operations.³⁹ Results from studies conducted in combat found that soldiers placed the greatest importance on leaders' competence, loyalty (caring), integrity, and leadership by example. Soldiers also believed that (a) leader competence facilitated the accomplishment of the mission in the most efficient manner; (b) loyalty ensured all operations were planned and executed to protect soldiers' well-being; (c) integrity provided faith that information passed along about operations was honest regarding importance and risk; and (d) leaders sharing dangers and hardships ensured that leaders' and followers' outcomes were linked and communicated confidence, which reduced the threat to group members' lives and provided them a sense of security.⁴⁰

From the leaders' perspective, the dangerous context increases their dependence on empowering subordinates to accomplish the mission and to provide timely and candid reports about the situation and their units' capabilities. Thus, leaders place great importance on follower characteristics of competence, honesty, and initiative, which help ensure mission completion with accurate and candid reporting. Results from a study conducted in combat to

explore the attributes leaders looked for in trusted subordinates found that leaders believed (a) competence greatly enhanced the potential for mission completion, and thus was the most important characteristic; (b) honesty ensured candid and accurate reporting so leaders could plan future operations; (c) initiative, discipline, and perseverance provided units adaptability to complete missions in a dynamic environment; and (d) loyalty to the mission and unit contributed to mission accomplishment.⁴¹

Temporary Teams and Swift Trust. The sniper mission described at the beginning of this chapter provides a context that is often present in public safety and military sectors—a situation where several law enforcement organizations must come together and form a temporary team to accomplish a volatile task. Team members rarely know each other, and if they do, it is often based on reputation rather than actual interaction. Leaders in this situation must establish what is sometimes referred to as swift trust if they are to be able to exert influence.

While individuals may prefer to be able to observe how a team member performs in a situation before trusting, they do not have that luxury in temporary groups. As a consequence, they tend to rely on shortcuts, such as prototypes or mental models of what ideal team members may look like. The closer a person matches the individual's mental model, the greater the level of initial trust. As noted above, a study conducted in an Iraqi combat zone designed to map soldiers' mental model of the trusted combat leader found that such a person possessed the attributes of competence, loyalty, integrity, honesty, confidence, courage, composure, and leadership by example.⁴²

Leaders can use the prototype of an "ideal" combat leader to assess themselves for self-development and also to create strategies to communicate possession of these attributes when taking charge of a temporary team or a new organization. Furthermore, organizations can use the prototype to tailor their leader-development programs so they are inculcating the necessary attributes. From the followers' perspective, they obviously need to be aware of their potential biases and ensure that they appropriately adjust their trust over time.

CONCLUSION

Mutual trust is essential to lead effectively, especially in dangerous contexts. The level of trust that group members have in their leader impacts the amount of influence the leader exercises, individual and organization performance, unit cohesion, and followers' job satisfaction.⁴³ The IROC trust development model provides dangerous context leaders with an easy, empirically

supported, and systematic means for building and maintaining trust within their organization. Thus, when leaders hit the “trust point,” they have what is necessary to lead effectively.

KEY TAKE-AWAY POINTS

1. Trust is the foundation of effective leadership across almost every type of organization and circumstance, but it is particularly critical when lives are on the line. People will focus on their personal safety instead of mission success when working with leaders and peers they do not trust.
2. Trust is built upon a leader’s competence, character, and caring.
3. Leaders must invest time and energy to build positive, empowering relationships with their team members that are characterized by transparent communication, mutual influence, and cooperation to achieve common goals and purposes.
4. Leaders need to align and leverage the culture and systems of their organizations to promote cooperation and trust.
5. Dangerous contexts affect the dependencies in leader-follower relationships that can influence the importance members place on competence, character, and caring; the strength of social bonds (cohesion); and the organization’s culture, policies, procedures, practices, and systems.

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