

Can Leaders Build Trust? Leadership with Emotional Intelligence



Last year, a headline in [Forbes](#): **Why Trust is the New Core of Leadership**. The old power-based leadership model worked in the past, but as organizations flatten and become more collaborative, the old model is undermining success. Is it time to make trust a priority?

If so, can leaders just “decide” to build trust? How does it work in real business?

Case 1: Take Ownership of Mistakes

John Caparella, President of the Venetian resort and an award winning manager, [spoke in an interview](#) with Charles Wolfe on PRX radio on how to build trust. When he was opening a new hotel he challenged his HR team to use one abiding rule in every decision they made which was “Do the right thing.” He modeled the behavior he wanted from others by willingly admitting his own mistakes and let staff know that they were better served to self disclose than not. Most organizations punish a person for making mistakes which encourages deception. By creating an environment where it was safe to learn from mistakes Caparella built a team where open communication, honesty, integrity and courage were internalized values. These all build trust.

Case 2: Demonstrate Trustworthiness

Harry Herrington is CEO of NIC. NIC builds official web sites, online services, and secure payment processing solutions for US government agencies. He is recognized as a trusted leader and was featured in the [New York Times in an interview about trusted leaders](#) .

Instead of asking managers, “Do people trust you?” He asks “How do you know people trust you?” He knows that in order for his leaders to be trusted they have to know what builds trust. He’s pushing them to find evidence to back up their assumptions about trust.

Harry is on to something. In a [recent survey about team climate](#) , we asked leaders if people trusted them... and we asked team members if they trusted the leaders. Leaders perceived trust to be a full 40% higher than did the team members. There’s a serious misassumption going on, and Herrington’s question would help these unaware leaders get real.

The Take Away: Intentional Trust

In both these cases, a leader made a decision: Trust is an invaluable currency for organizational life. Maybe it’s even THE measure of leadership. So they took action. It’s not about a secret formula, these guys used basic, logical steps to build trust. And it worked.

How about you? **How committed are you to building trust on your team?**

What’s the simple, practical step you’re taking to do so?

Can trust be learned? Yes! Join me on the next trust blog and I’ll share more of these strategies.