



Does Your Institution Instill Trust?



performance business customers human resources

Summary: Trust is incredibly important. It makes employees more productive and customers more loyal. We provide tips to help with both.

When you next stare up at the stars on an amazing night, know that there are 500,000 pieces of space junk orbiting around Earth too. Know also that there's about a 1 in 1B chance in your lifetime that you could get hurt from falling space trash.

You can't always control what falls in and around you, but hopefully you can control the trust your employees and customers have in you and your institution.

Trust is incredibly important, because when employees trust the company they work for they are more productive and less likely to leave. Customers are also more loyal to businesses that they trust. Given these realities, it is important to understand what creates trust within individuals. Fortunately, scientists have recently come to a better understanding of what makes an individual's brain decide to trust - whether it is an individual or an institution.

There are neurological characteristics that are the basis of trust in the human brain, the first of which is known as theory of mind and involves the hypertrophied cortex. That is the part of the brain where planning, insight and abstract thought take place. It is also the place that allows the mind to think about other people's actions and to ultimately harmonize our own behavior with theirs.

Empathy is the second characteristic, which is the ability to share the emotions of others. When the brain releases oxytocin, empathy is enhanced and the anxiety people typically feel when around other people is diminished. In order for an individual to trust someone, especially someone new to them, the brain uses both empathy and theory of mind to determine the actions and motivation expected for that person. When it comes to work or institutions that we are familiar with, an organization's leaders and how they behave have a huge influence on whether or not an individual decides to trust.

While it is useful to know how trust is built within the brain, it is equally important to take the time to determine the level of trust that exists among employees. One way of doing this is by surveying employees to determine the level of satisfaction they have at work on the average day. The more an employee enjoys their job, the more likely they consider themselves to be part of a team of people they trust.

Determining the level of trust within your institution allows you to see where the needs are and where you can increase that trust. Following are a few ways you can foster greater trust:

- Managers should be trained to lead by example and demonstrate trust in their employees. Show the same accountability you expect from those you manage.
- Open communication can help to foster trust among both employees and customers, so make sure you have a system in place for this to occur.
- Managers should be truthful with employees and own up to their own mistakes and shortcomings.

- Solicit feedback from customers and employees in a way that makes them feel that the feedback will be used and not disregarded.
- Educate your customers regularly to let them know you value them.

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