

5 Ways to Build Trust in Your Team

By Glenn Birkelev

Trust is the foundation of any high-performing team. Without it, collaboration falters, communication breaks down, and results suffer. As a leader, building trust within your team is one of the most impactful things you can do to create a thriving, successful environment. Here are five actionable ways to foster trust and strengthen your team dynamics.

1. Foster Open and Transparent Communication

Trust begins with communication. When team members feel heard and informed, they are more likely to trust their leader and each other. Here's how to foster open communication:

- **Be Transparent:** Share updates, decisions, and challenges openly with your team. Transparency shows that you trust them with important information.
- **Encourage Feedback:** Create a safe space where team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of judgment.
- **Active Listening:** Show genuine interest in what your team has to say. Listen without interrupting and ask clarifying questions to show you value their input.

Action Step: Schedule regular one-on-one check-ins with your team members to discuss their goals, challenges, and feedback. Use these sessions to build rapport and show that you care about their success. My personal approach is to schedule weekly 30 minute collaboration sessions and bi-weekly 45 minute development conversations.

2. Lead by Example

As a leader, your actions set the tone for your team. If you want to build trust, you need to model the behaviors you expect from others.

- **Be Reliable:** Follow through on your commitments. If you promise something, deliver it.
- **Admit Mistakes:** When you make a mistake, own up to it. This shows humility and builds credibility.
- **Demonstrate Integrity:** Always act in alignment with your values and the values of your organization.

Action Step: Reflect on your leadership style. Are there areas where you could improve your consistency or transparency? Commit to one specific action this week, write it down, but it in your calendar for every Monday morning as a reminder and start to lead by example.

3. Empower Your Team

Trust grows when team members feel empowered to take ownership of their work. Micromanagement erodes trust, while autonomy builds it.

- **Delegate Effectively:** Assign tasks based on your team members' strengths and trust them to deliver.
- **Provide Resources:** Ensure your team has the tools, training, and support they need to succeed.
- **Encourage Decision-Making:** Give your team the freedom to make decisions within their areas of responsibility. What do you think we should do, is a question that is easy to ask, and it helps your team member reflect on what actions they would take.

Action Step: Identify one task or project you can delegate this week. Clearly communicate expectations, provide support, and trust your team member to handle it. To support you, you can use the urgent/important matrix for guidance on what to delegate.

4. Recognize and Celebrate Contributions

Acknowledging your team's efforts and achievements is a powerful way to build trust and strengthen relationships.

- **Celebrate Wins:** Take the time to recognize both individual and team accomplishments, no matter how small.
- **Show Appreciation:** Express gratitude for your team's hard work and dedication. A simple "thank you" can go a long way.
- **Provide Constructive Feedback:** When offering feedback, focus on growth and improvement rather than criticism.

Action Step: At your next team meeting, highlight a recent success or contribution from each team member. This will boost morale and reinforce a culture of trust and appreciation. You could also ask a team member to share a recent win and celebrate with them.

5. Build Personal Connections

Trust isn't just about professional relationships—it's also about connecting on a human level. When team members feel valued as individuals, trust naturally follows.

- **Get to Know Your Team:** Take the time to learn about your team members' interests, goals, and challenges outside of work.
- **Show Empathy:** Be understanding and supportive when team members face personal or professional difficulties.
- **Create a Positive Environment:** Foster a culture of respect, inclusivity, and collaboration.

Action Step: Start your next team meeting with a quick personal check-in. Ask each team member to share something positive from their week to build connection and camaraderie.

Final Thoughts

Building trust takes time, consistency, and effort, but the rewards are well worth it. A team built on trust is more collaborative, innovative, and resilient. As a leader, your commitment to fostering trust will not only strengthen your team but also drive long-term success for your organization.

Start small—pick one of these five strategies and implement it this week. Over time, you'll see the positive impact trust can have on your team's performance and morale.

About Glenn Birkelev

Glenn Birkelev is a leadership coach with over 20 years of experience helping leaders and teams reach their full potential. He specializes in people-first leadership, sustainable growth, and building winning teams.

For more actionable leadership tips, subscribe to Glenn's newsletter at www.glehago.com where you will instantly get access to a large resource library and you can also connect with him on LinkedIn