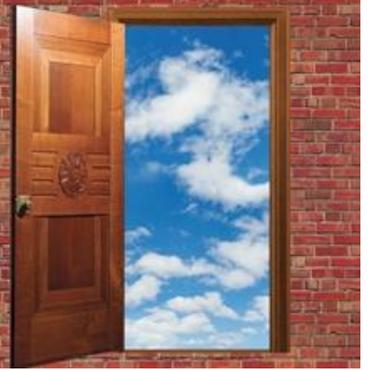


Why 70% of All Changes *STILL* Fail—
and What You Can Do About It

BEYOND THE WALL OF RESISTANCE

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Toolkit Page 152 When Trust is Low

What to do When Trust is Low

Trust is essential. You can't run a business without it. Customers leave. Risk taking evaporates. You find yourself surrounded by naysayers – or worse – yes men and women. No one dares tell the truth. Departments put up barricades creating fortresses inside your castle.

The Warning Signs

- **Employees Leave.** When turnover is higher than the industry average, it could be a sign that people lack trust in your organization. While there could be other reasons – low pay, a very attractive job market, better day-to-day benefits such as parenting leave – consider the possibility that mistrust may be the primary reason. By the way, they won't tell you this during exit interviews. You'll need to find other ways to get at the truth.
- **Customers leave.** Customers leave when they no longer have confidence in you. Sometimes they leave for price is you are offering a commodity, but too often leaders use that as an excuse when the real reason is right in front of them.
- **Labor actions.** When formal and informal grievances rise, it can be a sign that the normal channels of communication have broken down. People believe the only way to be heard is to meet you in an adversarial manner.
- **Turf wars.** Projects die because no one wants to give in. People act as if they are out for their own self-interests and willing to do so at your expense.
- **Machiavelli has become your patron saint.** Hallway conversations are all about ways to get around the system or get even.

Trust is difficult to build and easy to destroy.

If I want to build a relationship just so I can get something, people may go along if they see that it is in their interests as well. But without trust, people may be willing to sink the ship rather than giving you anything you want. Knowing that there is no foolproof approach, here are some things that can help.

Make the First Move

Extend an olive branch. People often wait for others to make the first move. Pride often gets in the way. Vera was estranged from her son. They hadn't spoken in years. When she turned sixty, she called him and suggested meeting for coffee. They met. One brief visit turned into another and another. Over time, they found that, whatever the past problems had been, they could be put behind them. Today, their relationship is pretty strong. And Vera gets to be a doting grandmother.

It is the small first steps that get things started.

Find Common Concerns

John Sweeney, head of the AFL-CIO, would meet with corporate leaders to look at common concerns. These meetings had nothing to do with any ongoing negotiations. They were simply an opportunity to discuss issues of interest to both parties. Those meetings were significantly different from traditional antagonistic relationships between management and labor. His gesture is only a small step and that's its beauty.

Keep Commitments

People liked Brad, but didn't respect him. He didn't seem to be serious about his job. They couldn't trust him. He made a significant change in his behavior. He began to keep his word. If he made a promise to do something, he did it. And he was careful to make only promises he knew he could keep. Over the course of about six months, people's perception of him changed. They started asking him to take part in key assignments. Brad never saw himself as unreliable, but he realized that others viewed him that way — and that those perceptions were all that mattered if he wanted to increase his influence.

Similarly, acting consistently in ways that appear worthy of trust makes a difference.

Mea Culpa

Sincerely accepting responsibility for our actions can be a powerful force. Our own fears about losing face or power or control often get in the way of even seeing that we are part of the problem. By taking responsibility you are creating a shift in the relationship. Even if the other person does nothing different in that moment, your mea culpa has shaken up the status quo.

Forgive Them

After the fall of apartheid, few would have argued against blacks seeking justice and retribution. But leaders took a different approach; they established the South African Truth Commission. People would be forgiven if they came forward. What's most important about this story is that the black leaders themselves were willing to lead the way by demonstrating that they could forgive their former enemies.

Turn Your Cards Face Up

Open Book Management is a tool used in some organizations to give everyone access to information on how the business is run. People receive information on trends, opportunities, threats, and financial data. These open books often unleash creativity as people begin to look for ways to save money and seek out ways to tackle problems. Instead of resistance to change, the organization's leaders find people pushing change.

Giving people information works one to one. It sometimes takes a while for them to trust that what you're offering is really accurate. With both of you interested in the same information, you increase the likelihood that you'll start to see ways you could work together that would benefit both of you.

Find Opportunities to Listen

When Peter Johnson took over as head of Bonneville Electric Power, environmental groups hated BEP. One of the first things he did was convene meetings with environmental leaders just so he could listen. He said, "People weren't sure I understood their point of view and, more than not, I probably didn't." He explained that this opened the door to a two-way educational process. He sought ways to come up with win-win solutions. People saw that he was sincere, so when he had to hold firm to a decision, they accepted it.

There is no easy way out. At times you may feel you are taking one step forward and two steps back. Progress can be slow, and the least little thing can set it back. It takes very little provocation to undo agreements. Keeping your eyes on the prize will be critical. Even when things seem terrible, it is important to keep your goal of sufficient trust in mind.

© 2010 Rick Maurer. Rick uses his Change without Migraines™ to advise organizations on how to lead change effectively. He is author of many books including *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*. In 2009, he created the Change Management Open Source Project, a free resource for people interested in change in organizations. You can access the open source project as well as many free articles and tools from his web site: www.rickmaurer.com