



Create a **climate of trust** favorable to cooperation

The challenge

A climate of trust is a prerequisite for cooperation. Cooperation indeed requires relying on others by giving them a say in your scope of activity, granting them resources for projects which you do not control, providing support with no guarantee of immediate reciprocation, etc.

To cooperate, people hence need to feel safe. But trust can never be taken for granted, as people continuously assess whether they can trust their colleagues, manager and subordinates. Creating a climate of trust requires constant vigilance, by remaining attentive to several aspects.

Four pillars essential to a climate of trust

Help people get results

To give trust, people need to know that commitments will be kept. A climate in which people know that they can count on others to attain their objectives helps to cultivate trust.

- **Establish clear objectives and evaluation criteria.**
Clarify how people can contribute to the success of the team and the company. Make expectations and evaluation criteria transparent to limit any risk of misunderstanding or surprise.
- **Be careful to provide requisite resources.**
Not having the resources to attain your objectives is frustrating, leads to disappointment and saps trust. It is preferable to adjust objectives if need be.
- **Capitalize on different types of expertise within the team.**
Encourage talented employees and experts to share their expertise. Providing recognition is beneficial to getting results.

Ensure consistency between words and deeds

People are sensitive to potential gaps, even slight, between words and deeds. Under continuous scrutiny, managers must be careful to align their messages and actions.

- **Be predictable in your management practices.**
Demonstrating clear and stable behavior is reassuring for people, as they know what to expect from their manager.
- **Assert and embody some clear values.**
Referring to a few fundamental values or principles provides reassuring reference points, provided that you act consistently and explain the reasons for your choices in light of these values.
- **Give yourself ways to respond to misbehavior.**
Plan ways to gain visibility of anomalies without having to go through hierarchical channels (e.g., through a third party). Quickly and visibly deal with identified misbehavior.

Foster transparent communication

Transparency on key information helps people make the right decisions and contributes to a climate of trust.

- **Share information.**
Facilitate access to useful information and numbers. Share what you know to avoid feeding the rumor mill. When you don't know something or aren't allowed to talk about it, say so clearly.
- **Recognize problems.**
Hiding or ignoring reality deteriorates trust and performance. It is a better idea to explain why commitments couldn't be kept or why it is necessary to change direction.
- **Balance the visibility provided to teams.**
When communicating, be careful about the impact that your messages can have on specific groups. For example, when attempting to reassure or recognize the efforts of one team, be sure not to disparage or cause undue anxiety to another.

Clarify the room for initiative

Trust is reinforced when people know the limits within which they may be autonomous and demonstrate initiative.

- **Clarify the scope of activity.**
Make sure that your subordinates each understand their respective scope of action, that of the other team members, and the conditions under which they can feel free to take initiative.
- **Grant the right to make mistakes.**
Give people permission to take calculated risks and make mistakes, provided they learn from them.
- **Verify results.**
Giving your trust does not mean you must abstain from oversight. It is recommended that you verify results rather than means and that you establish checkpoints at strategic stages, rather than throughout the process.