

The Simple Act of Trusting

By Dan Pontefract, author of *Flat Army: Creating a Connected and Engaged Organization*



In the book *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, author Simon Sinek states:

“Leadership is the ability to rally people not for a single event, but for years. Leadership requires people to stick with you through thick and thin.”

Although I wholeheartedly agree, one might argue the only way that level or type of loyalty can manifest occurs when leaders unilaterally trust their people, their team and their organization to do what’s right—and to do what’s right always. And when something is not done right, when there is an error in the process or something happens to go sideways such that the goal isn’t achieved, **a good leader reinforces his trust in his people.**

Whether a bouquet or a brickbat, whether a high or a low, whether a peak or a valley, whether a success or a mistake, the leader must create an environment that ensures all members of the team (direct or indirect) feel safe not just to do their jobs, but also to break free of them. The members must feel as though they can trust their leader to discuss any part of any process or scenario. The leader must portray herself such that anyone can approach her to ask a question no matter the time and no matter the problem.

The act of trusting is table stakes for any leader.

Trust is not about rules. Trust is not about systems. To be trusting is to be mindful of the human condition. We humans have the capacity for good and evil, for right and for wrong. As leaders, we must be able to trust those in our organizations to explore the human condition through the course of regular business practice. Micro-managing, for example, is merely another name for distrust.

Trust is not merely saying you trust someone. Trust is about actually acting in a trusting manner. It is about those interactions and experiences a leader creates for any situation. A leader may say he trusts the team, but it could in fact be a scenario unknowingly depicted by his team members through the acronym **ATNA: all talk, no action**. You might talk a big game about trust, but to be trusting happens when there is action—when there is interaction and experience.

Trust is both a noun and a verb. It’s when the word becomes a verb that a leader truly demonstrates the attribute of trusting. It’s when a leader can allow both the good and the bad to surface mixed with the permission of action. It’s allowing the human condition to manifest in a business environment.

For a leader to be trusting, she must have belief that whatever the scenario, the team will be capable and willing to achieve the objective. For a team to be trusting of the leader, it needs to possess the tacit belief that she is one of the team, not someone camping out behind a closed office door sitting at a marble desk signing expense reports. **To be trusting goes beyond being cooperative.**

To be trusting is to be able to act with authenticity and moral good. If, for example, a crisis should emerge, there should be palpable trusting actions delivered. When there is triumph, there should be equal levels of trusting behavior. **To be trusting may require time**, as trust is so often gained only by being earned. It is impossible for anyone in a peer relationship who does not exhibit selfless acts of trust to become a connected leader in our Flat Army.

To allow for failure is to be trusting.

To celebrate success is to be trusting.

To ride repeated cycles of the mundane and humdrum is to be trusting.

Vulnerability begets trust; trust begets loyalty.

How to be trusting:

- You don't know it all: Listen to the viewpoints of others.
- People look to you for direction: Be transparent in your views and actions.
- In the game of euchre, everyone hates those who renege: Apply the same thinking to Flat Army.
- All talk no action is paralyzing: Less talk and more experience and interaction is fruitful.
- Mistakes happen, so encourage them: Harvest and learn for the next suitable scenario.
- Sporadic, haphazard mannerisms are loathed: Institute consistency in all of your efforts.

Visit www.flatarmy.com for more details on the book
*Flat Army: Creating a Connected and Engaged
Organization*

