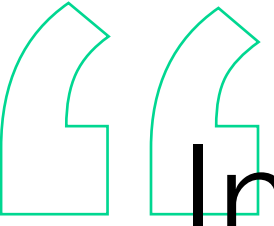




Leading with **trust**

Toolkit 3: Be the face of change



In today's world, the only certainty is that **things will change.**

Welcome to the third and final instalment in our leadership toolkits. Our work with business leaders has let us get a deep, first-hand insight into what's most important for business in times of upheaval.

Our previous toolkits looked at the role of purpose and mindsets to create better connections. In this toolkit we delve deeper into the issues of building trust.

We've interviewed and surveyed business leaders who tell us what works for them and their businesses.

However you and your team are looking to build trust in your business we're sure that these areas are on your list to move forward.

Other toolkits in this series:

[Leading with purpose](#)

How we can lead with bravery

[Leading with a growth mindset](#)

Connecting with your people and leading at a distance

Thank you to all our contributors for sharing their experiences and thoughts on developing their own leadership styles.


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55%

of CEOs said lack of trust was
a threat to their organisation

PwC



01

Trust in turbulent times

A time for trust

The pandemic has taught us many things. As well as driving economic change, it has spotlighted many latent issues such as racial injustice and income disparity. Inequality across society is more apparent than ever and trust has been put to the test in all corners of the globe.

But as trust continues to decline in the media, government and even NGOs, employer trust is at an all-time high.

With that comes great expectations. Employees expect CEOs to do more to drive inclusion, upskill, focus on employee well-being, and take a stand on ESG issues.

Let's explore what that means for business, people and performance.



People need to trust not just the executive but also each other. Trust and belief is needed in the vision, and on the executive team to lead and achieve that vision. Trust each other to play our individual as well as collective part in doing good for each other, the communities we live and work in and the planet.

Survey respondent

Employers can show a trust advantage when it comes to attracting talent

60%

Choose a place to work based on their beliefs and values

64%

Invest based on their beliefs and values

88%

of institutional investors subject ESG to the same scrutiny as operational and financial considerations

What people say

We interviewed experts to dig deeper into their experience with trust in organisations. During our conversations, we learnt what leading with trust means to them, and how valuable a tool it can be in a leader's arsenal.



Lucy Canning

Director of Brand,
Marketing and Business
Development
Grant Thornton



What do you think it means to lead with trust?

Employee engagement through the pandemic has helped increase trust in our business. We have really looked after our people and tried to go above and beyond to retain our talent. Ultimately, trust and leadership is about making sure people are and feel valued.

Throughout the past couple of years we've worked hard on how we communicated with our people; the tone, the transparency and the frequency. We listened to, and sought input from our people to ensure we were tuned into what was important to them. A good example of this was in respect of hybrid working – we honed our approach based upon what our people said was important to them, and ensured that any changes were well explained and that there were forums for questions and discussion. Having this focus on our culture from the top has really paid off with far greater levels of employee satisfaction.

What advice would you offer people looking to develop into leadership roles about building trust?

- Communicate – and that means listening as well as talking – so you can make informed decisions.
- Understand different perspectives and how different people like to work.
- Win hearts and minds.
- Take people on the journey with you – a transparent, honest and open style helps you to win hearts and minds.

What people say



Steve Flanagan
Chief Marketing Officer
KellyDeli



How has your leadership connected with others during the pandemic?
Has visibility improved?

We've done more business updates, more coffees, and generally connected more with the business. Communications have been more open and much more deliberate, and we're in a stronger position now because everyone knows we've always strived to act in their best interests. From a practical standpoint, connection has improved because we've seen leaders in a different environment – that helped foster stronger personal relationships. Ultimately, we've really had to trust each other more.

How would you describe the leadership style in your organisation?

One of our values is “Totally together”, and I think that's really come through. Our founder sets the tone of creating a family culture, and the leadership team has been very much in the same space throughout. Nobody feels too isolated.

Do you think people want more leadership or less?

People want direction. They want to know where they should play and for how long. If they understand the boundaries in which they're operating, they can do a better job and have the motivation to excel. If every decision goes up the chain, it's so inefficient. Trust and empowerment are key.

85% of consumers say they'll only consider a brand if they trust it.
Do you agree?

I do. People look at brand and culture now as fully intertwined with each other – a thriving culture is as important in building brand trust as the product or service delivered. So, I would advise all leaders not to be afraid of showing your culture. It's worth it!

Trust is one of the most essential forms of capital a leader has.

Francis Fei



02

The business case for **trust**

Trust pays

The business case for trust is stronger than ever. It's not something soft and fluffy. It's a tangible asset.

The numbers show that companies with a culture of trust are more profitable and more resilient than companies without it.

And trust brings about a happier, healthier workforce, promotes employee advocacy and strengthens talent retention.

It's great for wider society too. Where trust is missing from public institutions, businesses can fill the 'trust gap' and help solve some of the world's biggest challenges.



Compared with people at low-trust companies, **people at high-trust companies report:** 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout.

Unlocking growth

If you want to unlock growth in an organisation, you need to measure trust on multiple levels: employees, customers and shareholders.



Trust is critical to keeping people on the journey and enabling them to feel they have a contribution to our future success.

Survey respondent

According to Edelman – and our own research – building trust among employees is a great place to start.

In short, employees who trust their business leaders are up to 23 times more likely to be engaged with their organisation and its goals, than those who don't.

It's vital to build trust among customers too. But when it's truly embedded in your brand culture, it automatically spills over and shapes the perception of your business in the market.

Our survey reports that customers then employees are the most important groups to their company achieving long-term success.



74%

of institutional investors say a company's ability to win the best talent is more important in winning their trust than attracting new customers or increasing a valuation multiple.

90%

of customers say brands must do everything they can do to protect the well-being and financial security of their employees during COVID-19, even if it means suffering big financial losses.

Source: Six Survey Feb 2022 , Edleman Trust Barometer

What people say

Abhinav Kumar, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer for Global Markets at Tata Consultancy Services, shares his insight and experience with building and maintaining trust in a multi-national business.

He manages the brand reputation across 45 countries and more than 550,000 people – and he knows trust plays a huge role in inspiring both employees and customers.



Abhinav Kumar
Chief Marketing &
Communications Officer
for Global Markets
Tata Consultancy



Employer brand is so important in every corner of our business. Leadership and trust play a crucial part of that brand experience – especially right now, as the top challenge in our business is the shortage of tech talent facing the whole industry.

Trust underpins everything. When employees trust their employers, they feel empowered in their roles. Part of Tata's approach to fostering that trust, is to ensure employees stay engaged, with plenty of opportunities to develop their skills and grow their opportunities.

I'm a big believer that people don't leave companies, they leave bosses. A lot of our leaders have spent more than 25 years in the company, and the current Chairman and CEO were both promoted internally. It's inspiring for employees – they can trust that they have a long-term future at the company, and feel empowered to excel.

Of course, we can't avoid discussing the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had. At Tata, there has been a lot of effort to maintain trust and social equity. In some areas it's been challenging, especially where people are new to the business and trying to get to grips with the internal nuances via Zoom – which isn't always possible.

But, that's all the more reason for leadership to put an emphasis on communication. Things like one-to-one calls outside of work conversations to get to know each other, making an effort to pull people into conversations – it all helps them feel more engaged and valued. Ultimately, trust is built by knowing people well and sharing experiences, a leadership team doing what they say and building rapport.



When employees trust their employers, they feel empowered in their roles

Bad for business

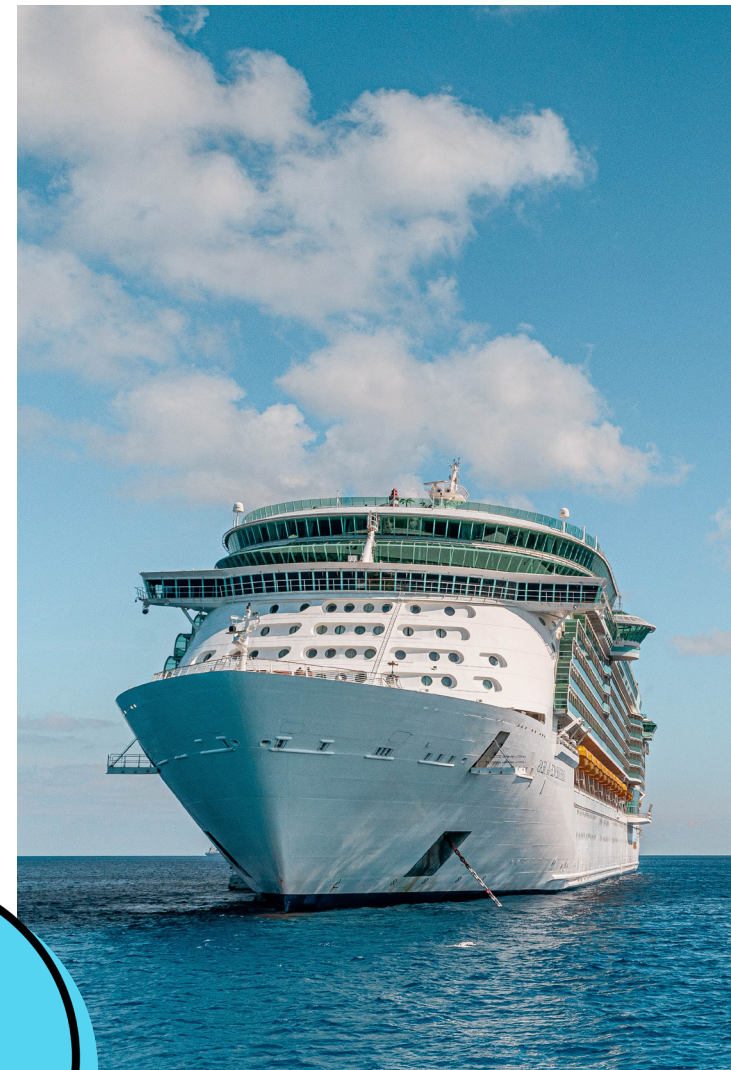
Your employees can be your biggest fans – but when the trust goes, it could turn a brand advocate into a whistleblower.

Broken trust is a significant risk to business. It can do massive damage to your brand, purpose and values.

A common way trust is broken is when reality doesn't match up to the promised purpose. A company's purpose must be reflected in the actions of its leaders to truly build its reputation. Some organisations see purpose as a shiny glamour – a marketing mechanism.

But “purpose-washing” decreases trust. And once you've gone down that route, it's hard to reverse the damage. (Need help with your purpose? Check out our previous leadership toolkit)

Consumers and employees are too informed, too connected and too sceptical to ignore broken trust. And it takes a lot of time and effort to build it back up externally as well as internally.



P&O Ferries'

P&O Ferries' story is a prime example of what happens when trust is broken. Announcing that the business was no longer 'viable' and the shock sacking 800 employees via Zoom obviously didn't demonstrate transparency or build trust.

In fact, the aftershock has spread far and wide influencing legislative changes, impacting safety, grounding ships, causing protests on the streets and ultimately customer boycotts. The company has even been refusing to issue refunds to customers who cancel their bookings, breaking a pledge on their website. Trust in the business is now thoroughly broken from the inside out.

03

What is **trust**?

What is trust?

Trust is defined as our “willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of others, because we believe they have good intentions and will behave well towards us.”

It’s the glue that holds businesses together. It enables them to function and align consistently.

It can be hard to build and easy to damage. It needs to be renewed on a daily basis – in everything you do as an organisation, and as a leader.

So it’s important to recognise what it is. And, more importantly, what it isn’t.

It isn’t

- Static, constant
- Undirectional; pushed down/out from above
- Monolithic; based on objective perspectives and rules
- Easily obtained
- Relevant only in times of crisis
- Compliance with rules
- Only relevant to external image and reputation
- Driven only by intent
- Ethereal or indefinable
- Necessary only for shareholders

It is

- Dynamic, continuously shifting
- Reciprocal and mutual; an ongoing conversation
- Individual; based on subjective perspectives and current events
- Challenging to build
- Relevant at all times
- A choice on the part of the trustor
- Integral to the fabric of business strategy and culture
- Driven by competence, action and intent
- Understandable and actionable within context and dimensions such as physical, emotional, digital and financial
- Necessary to all stakeholders – extending to regulators, communities, and societies

Purpose x Trust = Joy

Joy in the workplace comes from doing something you care about with people you trust.

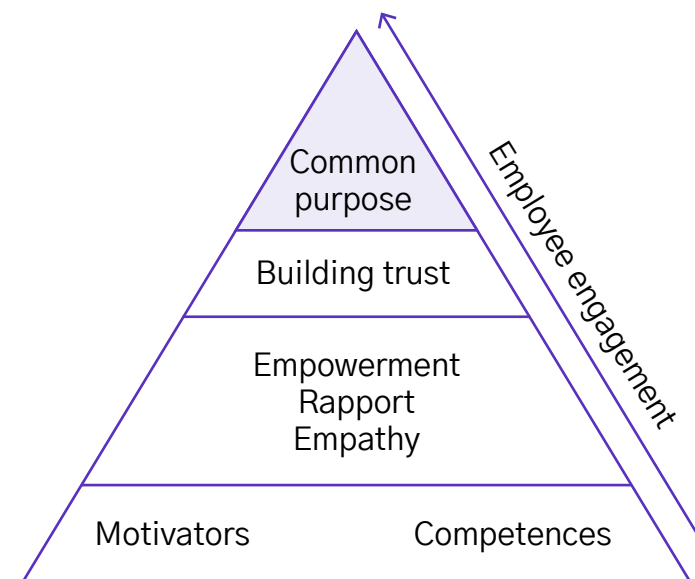
A study published by Harvard Business Review, 'The Neuroscience of Trust', demonstrates a clear correlation between joy and trust reinforced by purpose.

When you work on trust, not only do you positively effect employee engagement and retention, but you also amplify your organisation's ability to make a positive impact.

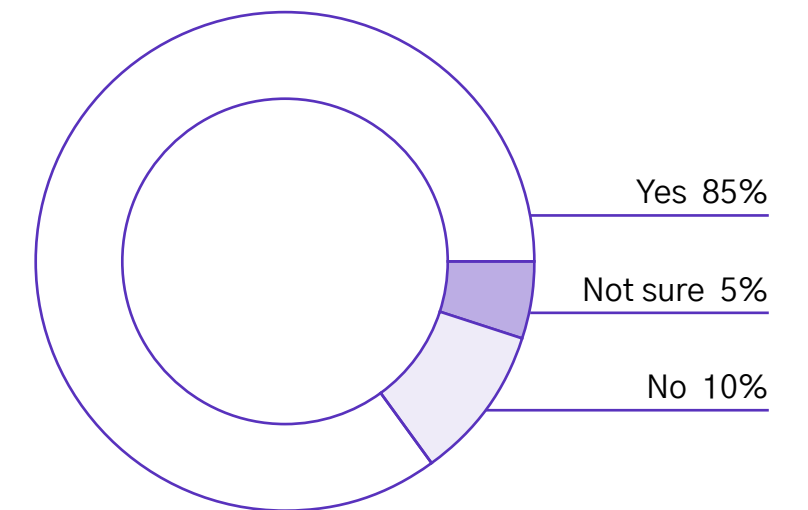
In our survey we found that there is a high level of trust in the board to deliver against the purpose of the organisation. This correlates with engagement amongst teams in those companies and leadership styles of high engagement and 60% saying they have fostered a leadership style of inclusivity.

It has been proven that a sense of higher purpose stimulates oxytocin production, as does trust. Trust and purpose can reinforce each other, providing even more oxytocin release, which produces happiness in employees.

Meeting needs increases employee engagement



Thinking about the future, do you have trust in your board to deliver on the purpose of your organisation?



Source: Six Survey Feb 2022

Leadership begins not
when others trust you
**but when you
trust yourself.**



Begin with trust, HBR



04

How to manage for **trust**

Trust is a two way street

We sometimes think of trust being top-down. But it goes both ways. As a leader, it's not just about being trusted – it's also about your team feeling that you trust them.

Remote working has changed team dynamics. For some, relationships may have suffered due to micromanaging and other behaviours that highlight a lack of trust among managers and employees. But for others, the new dynamics have increased trust and deepened connections.

With hybrid working here to stay, leadership teams need to find ways to rebuild or maintain trust in the new normal.



The pandemic has necessitated leaders to work harder to stay connected to their teams – on both a group and individual level. There are still the ‘big set pieces’ of course, but I see smaller, more human, actions which have made leadership more accessible.

Survey respondent

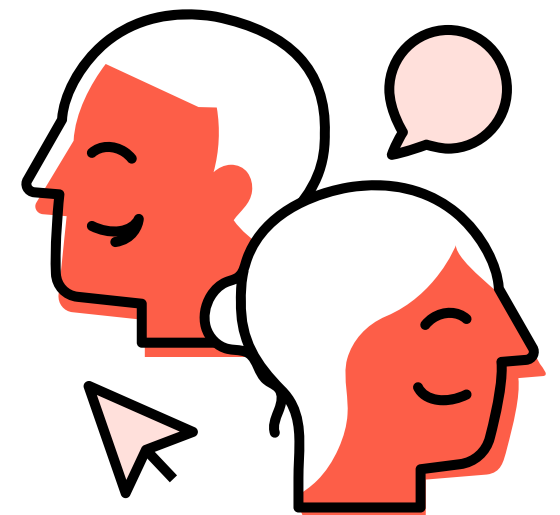


The business relies on people to get things done – knowing when to push, when to hold back and not being afraid to fail are critical components of the business culture and success

Steve Flanagan

81%

CEOs should be personally visible when discussing public policy with external stakeholders or work their company has done to benefit society.



Trust is a two way street

There are three key ways to help build more trust:

- 1 Lead from the top
- 2 Embed across the organisation
- 3 Champion openness and provide clarity

Knowing and liking someone is easy. But maintaining a long-term relationship requires earning and keeping trust over time. Regular check-ins can be a good way to build a better understanding of and empathy for the trust needs of a team.

Our survey reveals how hybrid working has affected leadership in the past two years.

60%

say it's very important to have an empathetic leadership style

65%

say effective communication has improved

55%

think visibility of leadership has improved

Source: Six Survey Feb 2022

What people say

Matt Davies, Chief People Officer at Target Group, discusses why trust is essential when building strong work relationships, and the need for a person-first approach.



Matt Davies

Chief People Officer
Target Group



Trusting relationships are fundamental to success, and the pandemic has put a big spotlight on this. For me, the relationships I built before the pandemic involved getting to know each other by working side-by-side. Those “in-between” conversations and social interactions were really important, so it’s been harder to build these types of relationships while working online.

Person first, colleague/client second

For me, it’s about building a relationship with the person first. Taking a genuine interest in them and what drives them. This can really help with difficult situations or challenging conversations because when you know the person well, you have more credibility.

Be kind, always. Sometimes the kindest thing to do is have a difficult conversation. People also need to buy into each other’s motivators and what drives them. But there also have to be boundaries.

My team would describe me as firm and fair. I build trusted relationships quickly that often become friendships, but it’s important to make sure that mutual respect for each other is there.

The power of vulnerability

I tend to adopt a coaching relationship, because people will want to perform for the good of the team and perform well. This involves being open and vulnerable – I show up as myself. Giving people direction takes empathy. It really is an art form. And the more open you can be with yourself, the more resilient you become. My favourite leader on this subject is Brené Brown, a researcher and storyteller, particularly her talk on the power of vulnerability.

When it comes to leading with trust, it involves investing time. Just because you’ve been a people manager for 10 years doesn’t automatically make you a great leader. It’s an evolution. You’re constantly learning and that learning and inspiration can come from anywhere and anyone.

It starts with you

Leadership begins not when others trust you, but when you trust yourself. Building trust often requires thinking about leadership from a new perspective.

As a leader, you need to look at your own behaviour first. Does it engender trust from others?

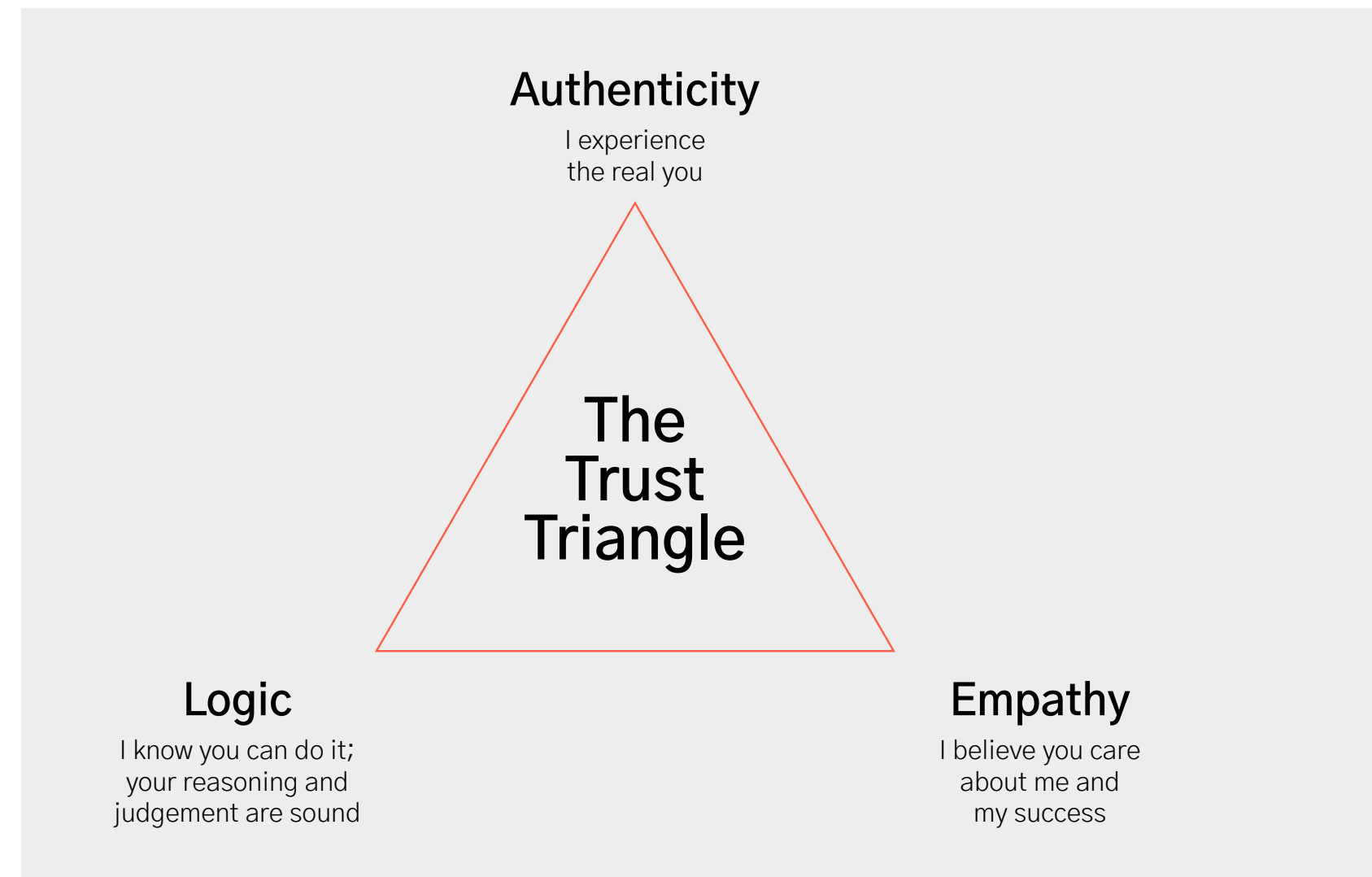
We like to think of trust as a three-legged stool. When there's a lack of trust, it's normally because one (or more) of those legs is wobbly. You might even be wobbly on different legs in different areas. For example, you may wobble on logic with your team, and authenticity with your customers.

You can use the Trust Triangle to help you find out what you need to work on. It's a framework developed by Harvard Business School with three drivers; authenticity, empathy and logic. We all have a wobbly leg – so the first thing to do is figure out which one yours is.

Then before moving onto the exercise on the next page, take a look at the **six core leadership styles** and think about where you sit on the scale.

Which do you identify with?

- Bureaucratic Leader
- Servant Leader
- Transformational leader
- Democratic Leader
- Charismatic Leader
- Autocratic Leader



Self-assessment exercise

How do you rate yourself in these three drivers?



Logic

How empowering are you with others? Do you tend to have all the answers or engage with others to contribute?



Authenticity

How well do you demonstrate commitment and consistency in keeping your word and promises? Do you “walk the talk” or do you simply “talk the talk”?



Empathy

Are others just a means to your end? Do you tend to switch off? Or do you do the right thing for the right reasons?

A quick test: How different is your professional persona from the one that shows up around family and friends? If there’s a sharp difference, what are you getting in return for masking or minimising certain parts of yourself? What’s the payoff?

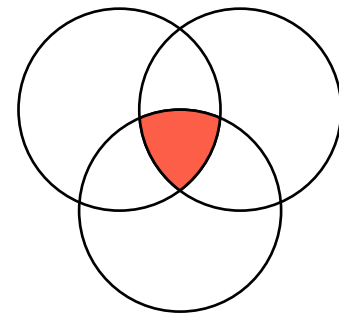
Take some time to think about how you can apply these in your day-to-day life and keep you accountable.

Exercise 1: Trust Triangle – The empathy leg

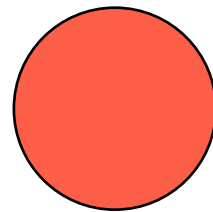
Empathy is the most common wobble. We don't always succeed in making people believe that we have their best interests at heart.

Trust, Diversity and Team Performance

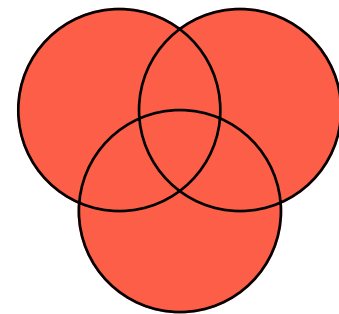
Diversity doesn't automatically confer advantages in decision-making. In fact, if diverse teams aren't managed actively for inclusion, they can underperform homogenous ones. Shared knowledge is key in decision-making, diverse team members need to feel empowered to bring their unique perspectives and experiences to table. When this happens you can expand the amount of knowledge your team can access and create unbeatable advantage.



Diverse teams
A diverse store of knowledge is partly shared



Homogenous teams
A common store of knowledge is fully shared



Inclusive teams
A diverse store of knowledge is fully shared

Taking the time to give and receive feedback is a vital part of practicing empathy. But in a busy world, full of distractions, we rarely make the time and space needed to do it.

Try out this exercise with your team – then take that open, listening attitude into all your meetings going forward.

In your next one-to-one meetings with your team turn off your phone and turn on your 'listening switch'.

Look them in the eye and ask these questions:

- How are you feeling today?
- What is going well at the moment?
- What could make your work experience better?
- What could I personally do to support this?

Exercise 2: Trust Triangle – The authenticity leg

Take time to reflect on your own authenticity as a leader.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you create conditions that encourage authenticity?
- Do you bring the ‘real’ you to work?
- Do you create a safe and welcoming environment for others to be themselves?
- Do you celebrate differences, or do you coach people to fit in?

Once you’ve thought about it, answer the exercise on the right.

What three things can you do to create an environment where authenticity thrives?

1

2

3



Exercise 3: Trust Triangle – The logic leg

People need to have confidence in your ideas. To do that, they need to understand what you want to do and why you want to do it.

This comes down to two things:

- Strategic rigour
- Your ability to communicate that strategy

More often than not, it's the second point where leaders struggle.

Take the time now to sit down and write out your strategy in a way your team will be able to understand. Use the pointers on the right to help you.

Ways to communicate your strategy more effectively:

- Keep it simple but meaningful.
- Tell a story (but start with your point first).
- Inspire, educate and reinforce.
- Use the right media; share widely and often.
- 'Storydoing' – create opportunities for people to get involved and use their voice.

Make time to build a strong team

Icebreakers help build trust by allowing people to learn about each other on a personal level. It can also explore their vulnerabilities, which can help build trust among the team. Try these icebreakers:

Back-to-back drawing

Time: Unlimited, but we recommend three minutes for the actual drawing.

Tools: Pens, paper/pad, pictures.

How: Ask your employees to pick a partner. Have the pair sit back-to-back. One employee has a blank pad and pencil, while the other has a picture with an obscure shape on it. The employee who's holding the picture instructs the one with the pad on what to draw.

Goal: See how accurate the resulting drawing is.

Why: This exercise helps your employees learn to rely on each other and communicate clearly.

Uncover strengths

To be a great leader, you first need to understand what makes people tick. There's strong evidence that focusing on people's strengths rather than weaknesses gives you a deeper understanding of what they naturally do best. That way, you can help them work smarter, drive more happiness and increase productivity.

Try getting your team to take the **StrengthFinder** test, then have a follow-up session to compare results. It's also a great tool to build into performance development.

At Six we focus on strengths to develop and grow – constantly. Our culture is based on three core values:

**Freedom to Own.
Freedom to Wow.
Freedom to Grow.**



What people say

Anna talks to us about the leadership style in her organisation, and why she believes trust is key to retaining good people and creating a successful business.



Anna Reeves

Chief Marketing Officer
Ascential PLC



While we have many different types of business within our group the collective personality of the organisation is definitely humble; we are proud of the business in quite a self-effacing way.

Transparency builds trust

Leadership really encourage and invite an honest, two-way dialogue within teams. This inclusivity and transparency creates trust. People feel that they've been on the journey with you, meaning there are fewer surprises along the way.

Dial up the human side

For us, performance and culture are inextricably linked. During the pandemic we focused a lot on the human side of our leadership. At an individual level, we've given people permission to take a step back when they need to. For example, letting them know it's okay to block out their diary from meetings to focus. Or take a walking meeting. We also introduced half-day Fridays and a long weekend in the Summer – the Ascential Weekend! After all, it's people that drive our business, so we want to show appreciation and take meaningful steps to retain them and build trust within the business.

Anna's advice for up-and-coming leaders:

- 1 Demonstrate respect equally. Everyone has a meaningful contribution.
- 2 Be authentic. Regardless of who you're working with, be honest and open.
- 3 Listen well. You'll learn something and it'll inform an opinion.
- 4 Give something back. It will help them, and it helps you.

Final word

Invest in trust

Trust has never been more tested – or more valued – in leaders.

It's not a nice-to-have. It's a must-have.

Failing to invest in trust can risk the well-being of an organisation's stakeholders, its reputation and its overall mission.

Trust can be a threat – but it's also a huge opportunity.

Now's the time to cultivate, manage and measure trust. Plan for it. Budget for it.

You'll get a fantastic return on your investment.

Interested in talking more about creating stronger brand advocacy in your business?

We'd love to chat more about how we are a trusted strategic partner aligning business strategy with purpose, transformation, brand and innovation.



Ruth Clarke

Partner
Six



Simon Basset

CEO
TML Partners



Ruth is a Partner at Six and responsible for growth and helping clients drive success through their brand and culture. As a member of both the CIM and CIPD, she combines her strategic background with a fresh look at brand, HR and employee engagement.

She has worked in the marketing industry for 20 years with a range of different clients of all shapes and sizes.

Simon is the MD and founder of tml Partners. He has worked in this industry for over 19 years and has now engineered hundreds of Marketing Director and CMO appointments with household brands through to high-growth businesses.

His career has been vested in developing long-lasting relationships in the senior marketing community and many people he has placed have gone on to become award-winning and industry-leading CMOs.

We're supporting clients on aligning business strategy with **purpose, transformation, brand culture and innovation**

[Visit our website](#)

More Six insights:

Toolkit 1:

Leading with purpose

Toolkit 2:

Leading with a growth mindset

Toolkit 3:

Leading with trust

