



Leader Tool

Trust, a leadership lifestyle

Trust underpins many of our relationships and endeavours when we balance risk in relation to what we know and trust. For leaders, trust is critical. Trust people, trust your teams. Foster trust to help shape culture. Trust your leadership instincts and yourself.

~ **Psychological safety:** It's a leader's responsibility to provide psychological safety and create an environment where people working in a team feel safe enough to raise their hand and admit when they have made a mistake, are unsure, have taken on more than they can handle or are having problems at home. When they do, they can be sure that other members of their trusting team will rush in to help them. Many organisations experienced this scenario recently when spontaneously people jumped in to support their Victorian colleagues to lighten their load under the increased physical distancing restrictions.

~ **A lack of trust:** It is fantastic to see a trusted team in all its glory but at the onset of this pandemic and indeed right now, not all teams are functioning at their peak. There has been much written in the media around how a lack of trust in government where people don't believe they need to adhere to restrictions or that the threat to their safety is not real. A lack of trust between government departments with blame being thrown about and a trail of events where no one was willing to admit they couldn't cope or thought that there was something wrong. A lack of trust is often seen as underpinning these situations.

~ **Be the first to trust:** We are all pretty definite on how important trust is, and we see it as something very precious that once lost, may take a great deal of effort to reinstate. It is sometimes easy to forget that it takes effort, consistent and concerted effort to nurture, attain and maintain trust.

Our vision is for each person to be their best in life and work. At AccessEAP that applies to what we want for our people and your people. Leaders who live and breathe what is often referred to as "setting people up for success" understand that if they support their people to realise their potential and utilise their strengths, their organisation will thrive and grow.

This approach often starts with a leader being the first to trust their people to do the job they were trained or hired for. Looking for ways to support, mentor and encourage their people rather than looking for ways to catch them out. People learn that their leader "has their back" and won't put them in situations where they feel unsupported. They learn that they can be vulnerable and ask for help instead of just going through the motions, faking it or hiding mistakes. When people believe in themselves, they are more likely to extend trust and believe in others so building on the strength of the team.





Leadership lifestyle: There are a few things true about trust. It can be quickly gained and maintained in the long term. However, just in the same vein, it can be lost and not recovered. Just because you have it doesn't mean you can't lose it and when it is missing from your team it doesn't mean you will never have it. It is not a zero-sum game. It requires commitment in the same way as getting fit or acquiring a skill or keeping any relationship strong. There aren't five magical steps to take. It is a leading lifestyle which is consistent and can be relied upon. It can't be switched off and on and is generally thought to rely on a combination of three things: authenticity, logic and empathy. Many theories on trust encourage leaders to accept that they may not be strong in all three areas. It is important to be self-aware as to where you need to develop traits, e.g. under stress and or dealing with your leader.

- **Authenticity** relates to letting people see the real you and is particularly important when working with diverse teams. When we feel that we have a lot in common it is easier to be ourselves. When we don't recognise those commonalities it becomes more difficult and more important to model bringing your authentic self to the table. Authenticity also means being vulnerable and being able to admit when you have made a mistake thereby permitting others to freely admit theirs.
- **Logic**, your people will weigh up how confident they are in your judgement, ability to make decisions and overall competency. This comes down to doing your best and getting runs on the board, accepting when things go wrong and working to improve.
- **Empathy**, has been raised many times when referring to the leadership styles of world leaders and has been linked with successful handling of the pandemic. When your people feel that you care about them, you care about them being their natural best, you hear their voice and recognise their challenges their propensity to trust you will increase. Conversely, when they feel that you only ask their opinion once you have decided what you will do, their trust in you will be undermined.

Think about teams you have worked with and try to pinpoint some of the characteristics that made them "dream teams" or trusted teams. Those positive traits and experiences will help to motivate you to put in the consistent effort required.

We are here to support you so that you can better support your people. If you have any further questions or would like to discuss a specific concern contact our Manager Support Hotline or your Relationship Manager. As always, as your EAP we are here to support your people whatever the nature of their concerns, please contact **AccessEAP** on **1800 818 728**.

