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Feature**The trust factor**

Vinita Gupta on why it is so critical for organizations to create a culture of trust and build a cohesive working environment

Trust is fundamental to the success of any organization. At its core level it is about predictability of people in an organization on what they will do/can do. Employees trust organizations when the day to day transactions are dealt with utmost transparency, fairness and meritocracy and vice-versa when there is integrity and performance predictability. It is fostered by a common vision, clearly articulated values, alignment of goals, and having clarity in roles and responsibilities.

**Need for caution**

There are a few reasons why organizations are sometimes cautious—fake documents, false promises, background checks are not cleared, false bills in terms of travel/relocation, misuse of privileges, sharing confidential matters such as policy and salary related issues, spreading rumors, etc.

Companies are also cautious when on the verge of cost-cutting and reduction of staff. It is then that employers are reluctant to share critical information (future plans, business strategies) with their teams.

Vivek Menon, Director-Human Capital Management, Integreon mentioned several reasons why the trust factor is sometimes missing:

- Some organizations have experienced in the past that a small percentage of employees have proved untrustworthy, and are then led to believe that no employee can be trusted
- Culture of the senior management team who believe that information is power, and tend to share as little of it as possible with employees down the line
- The fear that employees will share critical and confidential information with the competition, thereby adversely affecting the company
- Sometimes managers who are not secure about their own position promote this culture by not delegating and developing a second line. It is what is called 'the student might surpass the teacher' fear syndrome



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Steps for a healthy workplace

- Organizations must invest time and effort in building a healthy workplace. The senior management and supervisors have a big role to play in this
- Regular communication across all levels within the organization is a must
- A robust performance appraisal system with well defined goals
- Avenues for growth and career enhancement
- Encourage free and frank dialogue with employees and act on feedback
- Implement employee-friendly policies
- Having superior frontline managers. Organizations must invest in building leadership at all levels



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"When an organization observes some patterns of activities sabotaging its interests, it needs to take appropriate corrective and preventive actions after doing a root-cause analysis. If this requires to put all employees under the scanner, then they should do it. These actions, however, do not mean that the organization distrusts the employees," said Prabodh Sirur, Staff Operations Manager, Logica India

A matter of trust

"When there is trust, people are empowered, confident, willing to take risks and embrace change. There is healthy collaboration in such organizations. These characteristics are necessary for the success of any organization"



- Krishnamurthy Ramamurthy
Head Global Delivery, Collabera

It is extremely important for an organization to trust its employees as this affects their morale and will in turn have an impact on their work. Trust is what binds an employee to his organization.

"Distrust will impact productivity and widespread distrust will impact productivity big time. And when it becomes embedded in the culture of the organization, distrust will ruin the company beyond showing up in the bottom line"



- C Mahalingam
EVP and Chief People Officer,
Symphony Services

Employees who are trusted, will reciprocate, and will be loyal to the organization. They become more responsible and there is a high degree of accountability and ownership. A high level of trust will create an atmosphere within the organization where employees can focus on their work and not indulge in non productive activities.

"Employees who are not trusted will surely affect the bottom line of the company. In such a situation the employee does not feel a part of the organization and will indulge in activities that could be detrimental to the organization's interest"



- Vivek Menon
Director-Human Capital

Vishal Taneja, Senior Consultant, Redileon Search Partners asserted that in a trusting environment, employees are more motivated, innovative and responsible. Such an environment helps them collaborate well with co-workers and treat customers better, thereby achieving business growth.

"When there is trust, people are empowered, confident, willing to take risks and embrace change. There is healthy collaboration in such organizations. These characteristics are necessary for success of any organization. At Collabera, we try to

Management, Integreon

"If the way distrust was expressed hurts an employee, that too an immature one, deeply, it could result in deviant behavior which can harm the company's name and reputation. This could be from cases of misuse of equipment to misuse of data"



- Mamta Wasan
Vice President-Human Resources
and Training, FIS

give our employees as much information as possible so that they do understand some of the difficult decisions we have taken during down times," mentioned Krishnamurthy Ramamurthy, Head Global Delivery, Collabera.

According to Sirur, trust is a major contributor to the organization success because it generates a positive energy for better collaboration, greater productivity and higher profitability due to decreased transaction costs. It also improves the organization's ability to take greater risks and to implement innovative behavior because there is a general trust among employees that each is doing this for the betterment of business.

Impact on employee performance

A work culture that lacks complete trust will surely affect the bottom line of the company. In such a situation the employee does not feel a part of the organization and might indulge in activities that could be detrimental to his company's interest. This could take the form of gossiping, spreading rumors, poor quality work, spreading negativity and discontent within the team, etc., which if left unchecked will impact the organization negatively in more ways than one.

M.S. Shivakumar, Principle Consultant, Expertus opined that an employee's performance might go down thereby resulting in failure to maintain deliverables on time. It will also have a negative impact on his peers.

"If the way distrust was expressed hurts an employee, that too an immature one, deeply, it could result in deviant behavior which can harm the company's name and reputation. This could be from cases of misuse of equipment to misuse of data," said Mamta Wasan, Vice President Human Resources and Training, FIS.

C Mahalingam, EVP and Chief People Officer, Symphony Services, acknowledged that lack of trust will impact productivity. And when it becomes embedded in the culture of the organization, it will ruin the company beyond what shows up in the bottom line. Trust for an organization is like oxygen for the human body. When deprived, the organization will die. Depending on the deprivation, it is either a slow death or a fast one.

HR's role in building trust

The importance of trust-based relationships has never gone out of style. It is an important component contributing to successful performance, collaboration and efficiency in workplaces.

HR should connect, as connect is the buzzword in trust-building process. The connect can happen through HR forums, one-on-ones, team meets, open houses, people hours, etc. As an HR professional they should be watchful of their comments which should be preceded by deep thoughts to ensure an effective outcome.

HR should increase employee engagement between managers and HR teams. They should pay attention to employee concerns. HR should ensure that all employees are aware of the organization values. HR may need to undertake various programs to play this role.

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