

COACHING TIP

From Rex C. Houze

TRUST – THE GREAT ELIXIR

Trust is the single most important factor in personal relationships. Trust is the feeling that we can depend on another person. Management, or coaching, is about personal relationships and personal relationships are about trust.

Lack of trust is one of the main reasons players “fire” their coach. Players “fire” their coach in one of two ways: 1) by quitting and leaving or 2) by not performing (quitting and staying). If turnover, or low performance, is evident on your team, look for ways to establish more appropriate levels of trust.

Trust is built one encounter at a time and can be damaged or destroyed in one encounter. Listed below are several factors for establishing appropriate levels of trust:

- **Make and keep commitments.** Say what you will do and do what you say. When people know you are a person of integrity and they can count on you, their trust level goes up.
- **Take responsibility for your actions.** Admit mistakes and fix them.
- **Meet deadlines.** Give plenty of notice if you are going to miss one.
- **Be a good communicator.** Your ability to communicate can make or break relationships and your relationships can make or break your performance and results. Relationships are built on trust and trust is developed over time and based on feedback.
- **Eliminate fear of the unknown in your relationships by being consistent.** Consistency enables predictability, predictability enables trust, and trust enables performance improvement. Consistency gives people comfort and inconsistency causes them discomfort. If you say one thing and do another, people will feel unsettled.
- **Avoid misunderstandings.** Fix them quickly if they do occur.
- **Do not have hidden agendas.** Most people can see right through them.
- **Minimize confusion.** Confusion causes uncertainty; uncertainty causes confusion; and confusion contributes to a reduction in trust.
- **Inspect what you expect.** People respect you more when you inspect what you expect.

Mutual respect and trust go hand in hand. When team members do not trust and respect each other, they are unwilling and unable to have a meaningful dialogue, which limits their ability to handle conflict constructively. The fear of letting down respected teammates can be a great motivator for people to improve their performance. In an atmosphere of mutual trust, teams can make timely decisions and move forward with complete buy-in from every team member – even those who spoke against the decision during the dialogue.

When there is a high level of trust and mutual respect on a team, it is much easier and safer to speak with candor. Others are more likely to believe your message when they trust you and they are confident you have their best interest in mind.

Trust is the key to getting team members to maximize their energy. When there is tension in a relationship because of lack of trust, most, if not all, of a person’s energy is spent on reducing the tension. When there is a relationship of mutual trust, tension is at a minimum and all energy can be used to complete tasks and accomplish goals.

Taking the time to establish and maintain trust in all your relationships will pay big dividends in every area of your life.