

Viewpoint: Trust In The Workplace

Written by Brad Peterson, President, Strategic Asset Management (SAM)
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In the Aflac commercial, Yogi says, "It's what you need if you don't got it...and it's as good as cash."

The Speed of Trust is a new business book, by Stephen Covey's son (also named Stephen Covey). Just as the elder Covey's remarkable best-seller *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People* changed our working landscape for the better, *The Speed of Trust* will again tell us what we already know: *distrust is destructive where we work*.

The nature of trust

What makes trust? Yes, it's a character issue. AND, it's also an issue of competence.

There are some very competent people with whom I will never do business. They don't understand the winwin principle. They're always working their angle-*and looking to take away yours*.

At the same time, I know many people with whom I would trust my both wife and my money. They will always do the right thing. However, I wouldn't hire them, because they aren't competent at what we do.

So, trust is demonstrated. Its basis is simple:

1. doing all that we have said we will do; and
2. respecting other people and their property.

The dividend

Covey talks about the "tax" and "dividend" of trust, giving many examples. I have worked with companies where there was no trust, both because of character and competence.

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Things moved slowly, if at all. Bad decisions were made because people wouldn't listen to each other. These companies faded, lost money, were purchased and laid off people.

The dividend comes when everyone is good at their job and knows his/her role- *and gets it done without interference*

. Here, mistakes are not punished, but rather serve as lessons to get better. Consider the following example.

More than five years ago, our organization hired a guy who was very strong in maintenance consulting. We put him in charge of assessments. This individual also was very proud of his beard. When we won work at a refinery, everyone wanted me to tell him he had to cut off that beard. I suggested that he do so, but he chose not to. Okay, I thought, let the consequences teach him.

You guessed it. The refinery manager wouldn't let our bearded associate on site. He learned the hard way, but he learned the lesson well. We've never had a problem again.

Working on trust

Over time, we at SAMI have worked on trust. Setting an example each day of integrity as our number one value. What's the right thing to do? Next, we develop our people. We hire competence- *but status quo is never good enough*. Everyone has a REAL development plan every year, and his bonus plan depends on the achievement of this plan.

The result for us has been a place where people want to work and where they are more successful than they've ever been before. They are confident, rewarded and valued by their peers. As Covey says, trust can be developed. It can lead you to a more satisfying life and career. Covey's book is a good one. You may want to read it. **MT**