Trust Is Essential

With trust, we thrive. Without it, we compromise our impact, our effectiveness, and our wellbeing. So why is something as vital as trust so often overlooked? Why is it hard to discuss? How do we build it?

Traditionally, trust was built in person, and it was assumed to take time to cultivate. Today, we're increasingly being asked to build trust virtually and often on an accelerated timeline.

At AIM Leadership, we believe trust is essential. The first step is developing a shared language and framework to talk about it.

Know Your Outcome and Remember Trust Is the Foundation

Patrick Lencioni captures the importance of trust powerfully and graphically in his legendary book, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team. Too often people strive for great results while overlooking the scalable, sustainable pyramid of impact.
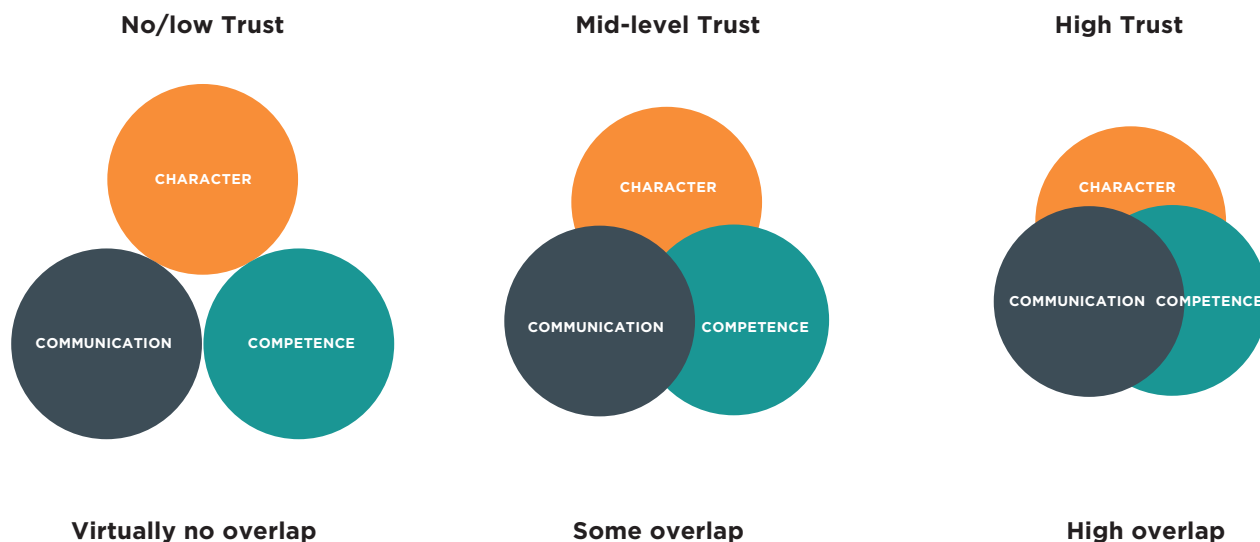

Trust, done right, stabilizes and accelerates impact. It is the ballast that facilitates healthy conflict. In turn, trust drives clear communication and accountability.

Effective decisions are built on accurate data. Trust is key to accessing this data.

Trust Building Models

Although trust is often overlooked, prioritizing trust and developing clear expectations and a language to discuss it is vital to sustained success.

One model I have built on and modified over time is the Reina Trust Building Model.
My modified model includes three key areas of focus:

No/low Trust	Mid-level Trust	High Trust

CHARACTER

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Virtually no overlap	Some overlap	High overlap

Trust is strongest at the intersection of these three realms.

TRUST OF CHARACTER:

- Who are you at your core?
- What are your values?
- What do you stand for?
- What do you do when no one is looking?
- Can I trust that you will do what you promise to do?

TRUST OF COMPETENCE:

- What are your knowledge, skills, and abilities?
- How self-aware are you?
- How well do you know yourself?
- Can I trust you to accurately self-assess and report your abilities?

TRUST OF COMMUNICATION:

- How do you share information?
- Do you speak with good purpose?
- Are you proactive and collaborative in sharing?
- Do you do it with the goal of promoting a collective
- purpose?

The Process of Building Trust
Trust is...

AN INSIDE-OUT PROCESS:

Trust starts within (e.g., by doing the right thing, speaking and acting with purpose, and keeping promises to oneself). Build awareness by clarifying:

- What is important to you and how do you communicate these values
- Your trust-building strengths
- Your areas of growth

AN INVESTMENT:

Trust is built by bringing your whole self to the table (e.g., being genuine, transparent, proactive, and intentional) and investing in relationships.

Do an audit to:
- Balance attention between the what (outcomes), who (participants), and the how (the process)
- Build self-awareness and humility
- Create a safe environment where candor is welcome

AN ONGOING COMMITMENT:

Trust accumulates when you commit to making more deposits than withdrawals on your trust accounts.

To maintain a positive balance:

- Proactively communicate (e.g., if you can't show up, be honest)
- Invest intention and attention in relationships
- Calibrate often with team members and other stakeholders

Turn Ideas —> Action with these Reflections

IDENTIFY TWO HIGH-TRUST RELATIONSHIPS:

What contributed to building trust? How did this trust deepen or evolve over time?

IDENTIFY TWO LOW-TRUST RELATIONSHIPS:

What caused trust to break down? What might you learn from the breakdown in trust?

The Consequences of Betrayal

To build trust, we need to be aware of our actions, own the impact of our behavior, and be accountable and responsible. Failing to do this will result in a breach of trust.

Too often, relationships erode over time due to small and persistent breaches of trust. In many cases, we are unaware the erosion is taking place and lack the language needed to understand and talk about breaches or betrayals.

Talking about trust and betrayal is always difficult and confounding when we like someone or believe they did not mean any ill will. This explains why we often fail to confront betrayals in a timely way.

Reina's Betrayal Continuum is one way to begin the conversation.

REINA'S BETRAYAL CONTINUUM			
MINOR		MAJOR	
UNINTENTIONAL	INTENTIONAL	UNINTENTIONAL	INTENTIONAL
Repeatedly arriving late	Gossiping	Restructuring resulting in layoffs	Disclosing proprietary information
Not keeping agreements	Undermining a coworker's authority	Delegating without sharing authority (e.g., decision-making power)	Sabotaging data systems
Missing deadlines	Backbiting	Scaling back job responsibilities	Not promoting a qualified candidate

AIM Leadership's Approach to Trust Building

While existing models of trust contribute important insights, they don't necessarily directly address the unique factors currently compromising trust in the workplace.

These factors include the fact that now and moving forward:
Trust will need to be built on fully remote teams; and
Trust will need to be built on teams that include a combination of fully remote and on-site workers.

At AIM Leadership, we help remote and on-site teams build trust.

We work with individuals and teams to develop the understanding and analysis needed to make collaborations more impactful.
Drilling down on what drives trust in the contemporary world, we understand how to build, sustain, and leverage trust to build the best organizations possible.

Turn Ideas —> Action with these reflections

How do you contribute to unintentional breaches of trust?
How can you rebuild or repair breaks in trust?
What small shifts might create a ripple of trust-building on your team or in your organization?

Ready to take on the challenge of building trust? Set up a time to talk to Dr. Camille Preston and the AIM Leadership team to explore how we can partner with you and your team. Visit aimleadership.com.

Ideas Into Action

ENGAGE · AWARENESS · ACTIVATION · AGILITY BUILDING · ACCOUNTABILITY · INTEGRATION/ACCELERATION — AIM Process

Awareness

- Notice where you experience trust being built vs broken.
- Which types of trust come naturally? Which types require greater effort?
- Do you prioritize trust in character, competence, or communication? Which aspects are easier vs harder for you?
- Reflect on both high and low-trust relationships to uncover your values and trust dynamics.
- Identify the depths of your trust: where do you feel trusted, and where do you trust others?
- What builds trust? What breaks trust?

Activation

- Deliberately dedicate effort to nurturing trust.
- Explore what methods are effective and which aren't.
- Incorporate a daily review to assess what contributes to trust and what doesn't.
- Observe where and how you break trust. Take ownership (incremental, minor breaches of trust add up).

Agility Building

- Explore trust in conversation with three others. (Start small, with gratitude and recognizing what works.)
- Observe trust - implicit and explicit - around you.
- Engage and spread trust.

Accountability

- Seek feedback about your trustworthiness.
- Refine how you want others to experience you in terms of trust.

Integration/Acceleration

- What works well because of trust? Why?
- Where are there opportunities to foster even greater trust?

Trust is vital to business, relationships, and our well-being.

Trust is an interactive, iterative process.

It is built over time.

Invest time to better understand your trust builders and breakers.

Explore how others perceive you and your trustworthiness.

The better we understand how we present ourselves and recognize its value to others, the more inclined we are to positively impact the outcomes.