

an excerpt from

***Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace***  
***Building Effective Relationships in Your Organization***

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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## THE NEED FOR TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE



*Jamie was the vice president of global leadership development for a Fortune 50 corporation. She was charged with overseeing the implementation of the company's new performance management system, overhauling their approach to change management, and developing and rolling out a leadership development training program, among a host of other initiatives. This all had to be executed throughout the company, worldwide, in record time to support aggressive strategic deliverables.*

*Jamie had a 150-person global unit of highly committed, talented people with heart, soul, and deep pride for the work they do. After all, they were the unit that facilitated initiatives throughout the company that made a difference in people's lives. However, the unit was paying the price of three restructurings in two years, the loss of 35 percent of its people, and significant budget cuts. Roles and responsibilities were unclear, decision-making boundaries were blurred, and expectations were not understood. Anxiety was high. People no longer understood the direction of the unit or the direction of the company; they did not know*

*what the future held for them, and they did not have a place to go to talk about it.*

*This lack of clarity and alignment created confusion and distractions. The trust people once had in one another eroded, and relationships collapsed. Channels of communication and collaboration, already challenged by having to accommodate people working all over the world, gradually broke down. People were at each other's throats, fighting for resources, hoarding information, and working at cross-purposes with one another. The quality of the work declined, and the time line to delivery was drastically off course. The group's reputation within the organization was compromised.*

Does this scenario sound familiar? In it do you see yourself or others with whom you have worked? Whether Jamie and her people realized it or not, high levels of trust had previously enabled them to have highly effective relationships that made them successful. Now, lower trust undermined relationships and compromised the unit's overall ability to perform.

Situations like Jamie's happen all the time. When they arise, we often feel helpless and hopeless, and hold the perception that there is nothing we can do. Yet we *can* do something about it! This book is about trust—the power when it exists, the pain when it is betrayed, and the steps you can take to rebuild it when it is lost.

To rebuild trust, Jamie and her people need to understand just how important trust is to every aspect of their relationships with one another. They need to learn the behaviors that build trust and how practicing those behaviors contributes to their performance and the company's operations. They need to learn what breaks trust and what they can do to rebuild and maintain it. Let us begin!

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## THE NEED FOR TRUST

Today more than ever there is the need for trust—a business need and a human need. The business landscape is constantly changing. Mergers and acquisitions; restructuring; strategic initiatives that require collaboration, employee engagement, risk taking, creativity, and innovation with shrink-

ing resources; and asking people to do more with less have become a way of life in industries across the globe. To take their organizations to the next level—whether it be increased speed to market, enhanced patient care, greater customer satisfaction, improved cost containment, cutting-edge technology, reduced union grievances, or expanded community outreach—businesses need their employees to embrace and adapt to change and to show up fully engaged and committed. In short, businesses need people to work in relationship with one another to produce results.

Business is conducted through relationships, and trust is the foundation of effective relationships. People need their relationships with coworkers to be trusting ones if they're to get their job done. They need to be able to depend on each other to do his or her part, to believe that what coworkers are saying is the truth, to have confidence that they have what it takes to deliver, to receive honest feedback on the quality of their work and coaching from one another to learn new skills. Trusting relationships are what make the difference between people's feeling good about what they do and simply going through the motions. Trust is inspiring and energy producing.

People today have a need for connection with their coworkers, and trust makes that connection possible. People have a need to understand others and to be understood in return; to use their skills, talents, and full range of capability; to challenge and be challenged; to share information and receive information; and to count on others and be counted on.

When trust is present, people are excited about what they do. They collaborate freely, channels of communication open up, the sharing of ideas becomes the norm, and people are not afraid to make mistakes. They take pride in the organization they work for, are committed to the people they work with, and bring themselves more fully to their jobs. In trusting environments, people are able to focus on their jobs; they are more productive and want to come to work.

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## BUILDING TRUST

The good news is that leaders increasingly understand the need for trust. They realize that the cost of not having it is too great to be ignored. Yet trust is highly complex; it means different things to different people and is emotionally provocative. It takes time to develop and can be broken in

an instant. The mere word *trust* stirs something in all of us, either warm feelings associated with positive experiences or sad or angry feelings associated with the loss of trust

Often people assume that it is *only* the organizations with morale and performance problems that engage in trust building. Although organizations with problems do engage in trust building as a viable solution, it is *not only* problems that draw organizations to this effort. Many organizations that enjoy strong performance and satisfied people commit to further building trust. They do so because they see trust as their competitive advantage and because their leaders value relationships. They want to make their organization's performance stronger, and they know that further building trust in relationships is the key to doing so. It is people working in relationship with one another that ultimately delivers results.

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### BREAKING TRUST—BETRAYAL



*A three-star general of one of our country's largest federal government agencies, was uncomfortable with the word betrayal and indicated that it did not belong in the workplace, particularly, his workplace.*



*The CEO of a personal care products company asked us not to use the word betrayal in a keynote speech we were to deliver to his worldwide leadership team.*



*The VP of operations for one of the country's largest health care systems asked us to help her understand betrayal. She knew that the nurses, doctors, technicians, and administrators of a recently acquired community hospital she oversaw were feeling betrayed following the merger. Her employees described the acquisition as being "swallowed up" by the larger conglomerate and as losing the work life they once knew.*

Your reaction to the word *betrayal* may be similar to one of these. Upon picking up this book, you may have been drawn to read further as

a result of your interest in betrayal and in how we treat it. Or you may have thought twice about reading the book and may even have contemplated putting it back down.

It is important to understand betrayal because it is a natural part of relationships. It is going to happen, even in the most well-intended work environments and relationships. We can turn to our relationships in our personal lives to gain greater insight: How often do we feel betrayed by a loved one, a dear friend, a member of our church or community?

Betrayal stirs emotion in all of us. It represents disappointment, let-down, loss, and pain. People often associate betrayal with the “big stuff”—the things that happen that catch broad attention and get intense media coverage. There was a time, many years ago, when we too assumed that what broke the delicate fiber of trust in relationships were large acts that had significant impact. However, our research and work over the last fifteen years have taught us differently.

What gradually erodes trust and creates a climate of betrayal in our workplaces today are small, subtle acts that accumulate over time. When we don’t do what we say we will do, when we gossip about others behind their backs, when we renege on decisions we agreed to, when we hide our agenda and work it behind the scenes, and when we spin the truth rather than tell it, we break trust and damage our relationships.

Betrayal is an intentional or unintentional breach of trust or the perception of a breach of trust. An intentional betrayal is a self-serving action done with the purpose of hurting, damaging, or harming another person. An unintentional betrayal is the by-product of another person’s self-serving action that results in people being hurt, damaged, or harmed.

Betrayal shakes our identity, it causes us to wonder “who am I,” it erodes our confidence, and causes us to question what we have to contribute. We become distracted and lose our ability to focus on getting the job done. Imagine for a moment the impact on performance when people show up for work distracted, unable to concentrate, and questioning their sense of belonging and capability.

What do we do when we feel betrayed? Do we shut down? Do we seek to get back? After all, we were hurt; it is only natural that we want to hurt in return. Do we withdraw our spirit and energy from our work and simply go through the motions, declaring, “They will get only the minimum

from me”)? Or do we seek to work through our pain and allow the experience to be a teacher that strengthens us and our relationships with others?

We have all been betrayed, and we have all betrayed others. When we learn that we have betrayed another, intentionally or unintentionally, how do we respond? Do we defend, rationalize, and justify our behavior? Do we excuse it—“I was busy and didn’t mean it”? Do we imply that our act was not a big deal and that perhaps the other is overreacting? Or do we assume responsibility for our behavior that harmed another and reflect on what was going on inside of us to behave in such a way?

Clearly we have a choice. When we have been betrayed, we may choose to remain bitter, resentful, hurt, and angry. We may choose to feel victimized. When we have betrayed another, we may choose to deny the impact of our behavior. We may choose to view the other person as overreacting and making a big deal out of nothing.

Or we can choose to reframe the experience of being betrayed or betraying another as an opportunity to learn more about ourselves and to deepen our relationships with others. The Trust & Betrayal Model will provide a framework in which to exercise those choices.

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## THE PAYOFF OF REBUILDING TRUST



*Sandra, a customer service manager of a telecommunications firm, thought she was operating with the best interests of the company in mind. Yet at a meeting of her management team the day before, Sandra’s boss did not support her. In fact, he belittled her with his unfounded remarks. Sandra was upset, but said nothing to her boss in her defense. After the meeting, she quickly left the room feeling quite defeated.*

*The next day Sandra took a risk. She knew she could be fired for speaking up. Yet she also knew she had to do something and do it soon! After a sleepless night worrying, Sandra walked into her boss’s office and asked if they could talk. She told her boss her side of the story: that she felt misunderstood and betrayed by her boss’s comments and actions the day before and that her boss’s comments were not justified. The two*

*of them talked the situation through. The boss admitted the mistake he made, and Sandra took responsibility for her part. Both talked about what they would do to prevent misunderstanding in the future. Sandra and her boss were able to restore trust and confidence in each other, and in their relationship.*

In working through the issues and restoring trust in her relationship with her boss, Sandra was able to refocus on accomplishing the tasks of her job, instead of worrying about whether she had one. She did not have to waste her energy wondering about how her boss felt—she *knew*, because she asked him. She more fully understood her boss and was confident that they could work things through. What a relief to know that he too was human, that he made mistakes and would own them. She would never have known that if she had not taken responsibility for her feelings and concerns by speaking up.

Taking the time to build and maintain trust in the workplace allows employees to focus their energies on what they are there to do and want to do. As a result, suggestions for product and process improvements proliferate, and productivity increases as employees develop a sense of pride and ownership in their jobs and meaning in their work.

Trust-inspiring work environments are liberating. When employees feel good about the people they are working with and the company they are working for, they enjoy coming to work and generally work harder at their jobs, giving more of themselves—accepting challenges, stepping into the unknown, and seeing change as an opportunity rather than a threat.

We have heard from hundreds and hundreds of people that although they would not want to live their past betrayals again, they are grateful for the experience because of how it contributed to the people they are today and the insights they gained about themselves, relationships, and life.

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## LEADERSHIP TRUSTWORTHINESS

At the core of trust building is increasing our awareness of ourselves and our behaviors with others. Through our heightened awareness, we are in a stronger position to choose to practice behaviors that build trust. By practicing these behaviors consistently, leaders earn their trustworthiness.



Trust is reciprocal: you have to give it to get it, and it is built step-by-step over time. A common mistake leaders make is to assume that their position, role, or title earns them their trustworthiness. Nothing could be further from the truth. The only thing that earns a leader trustworthiness is the way they behave. And to be trusted by others, leaders must first be willing to trust them. Trust begets trust.

Leaders earn trustworthiness by practicing such behaviors as honoring their agreements; behaving consistently, even during challenging times; investing in their people by providing feedback and opportunities to learn new skills; acknowledging employees' capabilities by including them in decisions, even the big ones; by maintaining open channels of communication; and yes, by holding people accountable.

Trustworthy leaders are safe—safe to talk to, to share problems with, and to share fears and concerns with. They are safe to be human with. As a result, people are safe to challenge the system and perform beyond expectations. Employees feel more freedom to express their creative ideas. They are more willing to take risks, admit mistakes, and learn from those mistakes.

Trustworthy leaders are kept well informed. They know where their people and their work stand because their people tell them. There is no need to keep secrets and dance around the real story.

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## UNDERSTANDING TRUST AND BETRAYAL

Trust in the workplace is difficult for many people to understand because of its complexity and the emotions it stirs. However, its importance can not be overstated. Building trust is the *necessary* thing to do for business performance and the right thing to do for relationships. Without trust an organization will not meet or exceed its potential, and workplace relationships will not thrive.

Betrayal is a natural part of relationships and cannot be ignored. Betrayal breaks trust and the spirit of relationships. When betrayal is worked through appropriately, however, it will strengthen an organization and create opportunities for lasting transformation.

The Reina Trust & Betrayal Model is a practical framework for building trust. We take the complex nature of trust and make it simple. We take what means different things to different people and develop a

shared understanding. We illustrate three specific types of trust, the Trust of Character (contractual trust), the Trust of Disclosure (communication trust), and the Trust of Capability (competence trust). We discuss specific trust-building behaviors, develop your awareness of what breaks trust, and describe the steps to rebuild it and the characteristics necessary to sustain healthy levels of trust. This model serves as the framework for the remainder of the book. We provide trust-building examples, tools, tips, and exercises for you to use with yourself and others. Although the focus of this book is trust, betrayal, and healing in workplace relationships, you can use the Trust & Betrayal Model and its underlying principles in relationships in all facets of your life.

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## TRUST BUILDING IN ACTION

### Reflecting on Your Experience

1. How has trust in yourself and your relationships with others helped you accomplish your personal and professional goals?
2. How has broken trust or betrayal in yourself and your relationships with others hindered you in accomplishing your personal and professional goals?

### Application Exercise

Think about and discuss the following questions with your team members as they relate to the team's or the organization's goals.

1. What are your team's key goals? What business needs must be met in order to achieve these goals? What do people need from one another to achieve these goals? How would trust building help meet business and human needs?
2. What key strategic initiatives are at play in your organization? What business needs must be met in order for these initiatives to be successful? What human needs must be met in order for these initiatives to be successful? How would trust building help meet business and human needs?

**Trust Note**

Today more than ever, there is the need for trust—a business need and a human need. When trust is present, people are excited about what they do; they collaborate freely, channels of communication open up, sharing ideas becomes the norm, and people are not afraid to make mistakes. They take pride in the organization they work for, are committed to the people they work with, and are more productive in their jobs.

**Trust Tip**

Business is conducted through relationships, and trust is the foundation of effective relationships. People need trust in their relationships with coworkers to get the job done. Trust building makes organizations work!

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