Building Team Trust
Developing Group Cohesion

Have you ever managed people who didn't trust one another? If you have, then you'll know how challenging and draining this can be. A team without trust isn't really a team: it's just a group of individuals, working together, often making disappointing progress. They may never reach their full potential if trust isn't present. So, as a leader, what can you do to create a culture of trust within your team?

1. Lead by Example
If you want to build trust within your team, then lead by example, and show your people that you trust others. This means trusting your team, your colleagues, and your boss. Never forget that your team members are always watching and taking their lead from you.

2. Communicate Openly
Open communication is essential for building trust. You need to get everyone on your team talking to one another in an honest, meaningful way, and you can use several strategies to accomplish this. Be sure that the definition of the team's purpose is clear, as well as each person's role. You also may want to consider organizing team building exercises that will help "break the ice" and encourage people to open up and start communicating.

3. Know Each Other Personally
One way to build trust is to encourage your team members to see their colleagues as people. Think about creating situations that help them share personal stories, and bond. Another way to get the team to form stronger bonds, is to engage in informal group discussions around team related topics such as team values.

4. Don't Place Blame
When people work together, honest mistakes will happen, and it's easy to blame the people who cause them. However, when everyone starts pointing fingers, an unpleasant atmosphere can develop. This lowers morale and undermines trust. Instead, encourage everyone in your group to think about mistakes in a constructive way, about what can be done to fix what happened, and how can the team move forward together.

5. Discourage Cliques
Sometimes, cliques can form within a team, often between team members who share common interests or work tasks. However, these groups can— even inadvertently—make others feel isolated. They can also undermine trust between group members. Start an open discussion about this with your team members, and see what they think about cliques and their effect on other group members. Only by addressing the issue openly can you discourage this damaging behavior.

6. Discuss Trust Issues
If you sense that your team has trust issues, it's essential to find out how these problems originate so that you can come up with a strategy for overcoming them. Bring issues up at team meetings. Ask your team members about the level of trust within the group, as well as why they think there's a lack of trust.

Wrapping Up
Trust is an essential element in team productivity. Without trust, it's very difficult for teams to achieve meaningful results. But with trust, teams can accomplish everything they set out to do... and more. As a leader, it's important that you set an example. Show your team members how critical trust is to you by demonstrating your trust in them, as well as in your colleagues. Next, make an effort to help everyone get to know each other on a personal level. Encourage conversations on values, family, or hobbies. Last, discourage cliques, if you feel that they're damaging to the group's trust and morale.

Some thoughts . . .
"Trust is knowing that when a team member does push you, they're doing it because they care about the team." - Patrick Lencioni

"When a gifted team dedicates itself to unselfish trust, combines instinct with boldness and effort, it is ready to climb." - Patanjali

"Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the ME for the WE." - Phil Jackson

"Without trust we don't truly collaborate; we merely coordinate or, at best, cooperate. It is trust that transforms a group of people into a team." - Stephen Covey