

TIP #4 – FEBRUARY 2006 – A LEADER’S WALK OF TRUST
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Leadership is a relationship. The cornerstone of effective relationships is trust. Without trust, relationships are destined for significant problems. Without trust, relationship will often end up being short term.

Trust is one of the dynamics we explore within the Leadership Challenge Practice of Enable Others to Act. One of my favorite Workshop activities to explore this trust dynamic is the Leader’s Walk of Trust, which works like this:

We ask everyone to stand up and prepare to encounter the other program participants. It is challenge by choice, so people are allowed to choose whom they encounter, but the goal is for them to encounter everyone.

As they meet each person, they are to say one of three things (and nothing else):

“I trust you,”

“I don’t trust you,” or

“I don’t care to say.”

People are immediately struck with the dilemma of what to say and how truthful to be in their communications. After all of the encounters and communications take place, a very interesting debrief tends to follow.

Some typical debrief questions are:

How did that go?

What did you say?

Was anyone surprised by what they heard?

Did anyone say anything other than I trust you?

If you said I trust you, what were you talking about? You trust them with what?

What is most interesting about this activity is it allows people to experience the dilemma of how truthful to be and what it means to communicate trust. These three messages (I trust you, I don’t trust you, or I don’t care to say) are the meanings people are getting from our everyday actions in the workplace. What matters more than our words are the actions we take; people are getting those messages we are sending very clearly.

A Leadership Challenge for all leaders is to communicate, “I trust you” in our everyday actions. Since trust is an inside out development dynamic, we must elevate our own ability to be vulnerable and trust others before we can ask others to raise their level of trust.