

The "Trust Equation" is a structured way to consider how to improve relationships, introduced by David Maister, Charles Green, and Robert Galford in their book *The Trusted Advisor*. The equation breaks trust down into four components: Credibility, Reliability, Intimacy, and Self-Orientation. These elements can serve as a framework for structuring a collaborative team meeting focused on building trust internally.

1. Credibility: Expertise and Competence

Credibility refers to the perception that colleagues are knowledgeable, competent, and capable of delivering on their promises.

Discussion Questions:

1. What can we do to ensure that everyone feels confident in the expertise of their teammates?
2. How can we highlight and leverage the individual strengths of each team member?
3. How can we be more transparent about what we know and what we don't?

Actionable Steps:

- Sharing updates on individual and team skill development.
- Encouraging a culture of asking for help when unsure, to avoid "faking" expertise.
- Opportunities for cross-training or mentorship.

2. Reliability: Dependability and Consistency

Reliability is about consistency in actions and following through on commitments.

Discussion Questions:

1. How reliable do we think we are as a team? What can we do to improve?
2. How can we set clear expectations for deadlines, responsibilities, and follow-through?
3. How can we ensure we are holding each other accountable in a constructive way?

Actionable Steps:

- Establishing or improving systems for tracking commitments
- Developing norms for accountability that include regular check-ins.
- Setting more realistic timelines and ensuring clear ownership of tasks.

3. Intimacy: Safety and Emotional Connection

Intimacy refers to the level of safety and openness within the team; how comfortable people feel sharing their thoughts, concerns, and even vulnerabilities.

Discussion Questions:

1. How comfortable are we with being open about challenges or mistakes?
2. What can we do to create a safer, more inclusive environment for sharing?
3. How can we better support each other, both professionally and personally?

Actionable Steps:

- Setting aside time for personal check-ins, not just work updates.
- Developing a culture where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities, not failures.
- Using team-building exercises to strengthen relationships
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4. Self-Orientation: Altruism vs. Self-Interest

Self-orientation measures whether people perceive that you are focused on your own interests or the interests of the team.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we ensure that we are working toward team goals and not just individual goals?
2. What behaviours show a focus on personal gain, and how can we address those?
3. How can we encourage more team-centric decision-making and collaboration?

Actionable Steps:

- Promoting shared ownership of goals and success metrics, so everyone feels involved.
- Rewarding team achievements over individual accomplishments.
- Creating structures for peer recognition, so contributions to team success are acknowledged.

5. Balancing the Equation: How the Four Elements Work Together**Discussion Questions:**

1. Which component of the trust equation do we think we excel at as a team? Which do we need to improve?
2. How do we balance personal accountability with team trust?
3. How can we ensure that improvements in one area don't negatively affect another area

Actionable Steps:

- Have team members assess where the group stands on each element (credibility, reliability, intimacy, self-orientation).
- Create a prioritised action plan based on areas needing the most improvement.
- Schedule periodic "trust check-ins" to measure progress and adjust strategies.