WITHOUT TRUST, PEOPLE WON'T BUY IN

Build the one thing that makes every other conversation effective



- **Only 19% of U.S. employees strongly agree they trust the leadership of their organization, down from a 2019 peak of 24%.**
- **Only about one in three strongly agree their manager creates a trusting and open work environment.**

Gallup, Leadership and Management Indicator, 2025

Trust is not soft

Trust is the foundation of the model because it builds the effectiveness of every action. With a trusting relationship, expectations feel like partnership, observation feels like support, and feedback leads to real improvement. Without it, the same expectation reads as a setup, the same observation reads as surveillance, and the same feedback reads as a paper trail to be used against them. You cannot skip building trust and run the model and get the results you want. Trust is built in the accumulation of small, consistent, unglamorous moments when you follow through and invite people in.

Three in-the-moment signs trust is thin

- People tell you what they think you want to hear. Are you hearing "yes" a little too often?
- Bad news reaches you last, and usually from someone other than the person closest to it.
- People change their behavior when they see you coming.

Adjust your approach – trust built in five habits

1. **Do what you said you would do.** Every small kept commitment counts more than one large gesture.
2. **See people as people and get to know them.** See people as people and get to know them. Everyone has their own goals and priorities. People notice and respond when you remember what matters to them and help them get there.
3. **Make it safe at work.** Admit what you don't know; a little vulnerability goes a long way, especially when your team knows what you don't. Then welcome disagreement. Watch how you respond the first time someone challenges your thinking, because everyone else is watching too.
4. **Advocate for others.** Few things feel better than knowing someone is on your side.
5. **Help others improve their performance.** People respond when they know you are invested in their success.

Be trustworthy.

Trust is not one of the three steps. It is the foundation that makes them work. Align, Observe, Celebrate & Enhance on a foundation of trust, and performance follows. Build on anything else, and you will keep running the cycle without getting the best results.

Want help building this into your business? Let's talk.
Want to dip your toes in first? Join The Joyful Leadership Lab, a free monthly discussion group.

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