

Strong Teams: Where the Magic Comes From

By: Dan Rieves, Bleed Green Team Dynamics



We are not great friends because we are “trauma bonded.” We went through difficult things together, sure. Saw things and did things I wouldn’t wish on anyone. But at its core, the people whom I call friends from my Ranger career get that rare title by one qualification: Trust. It’s not common interests, it’s not camaraderie, it’s not magic. **It’s trust.**

It wasn’t a tough sell to get me to attend the America Outdoors Association Conference. Warm my bones in Phoenix for a few days in December, have conversations with amazing people who also found a way to survive without getting a “real job.” Adventurers empower people to get a taste of adventures of their own. Just awesome.

We spent a robust hour talking about infusing our teams with a balance of Character, Competency and Consistency. Discussing the importance of solving problems with the right tools, avoiding the traps of solving character problems with competency solutions. How building character based organizations helps with employee recruitment and retention; and how recognition done the right way can go from superficial to transformational.

Your Culture Problem is a Trust Problem

Sometimes feedback on the topic sounds like this: All that sounded great, Dan... But we have a work culture problem that will not even allow these principles to take root. Our communication is terrible, our leadership seems either indifferent or downright angry. The whole thing is exhausting. Simple things often seem hard and hard things, well, the hard things never get addressed.

Here is my diagnosis: You don’t have communication issues, indifference and anger issues. Your problem isn’t that you avoid challenges. You have a trust problem.

A lack of trust is a cancer that eats away at everything in our relationships and organizations. We often treat the symptoms but not the cause. Trust is a big topic, and this isn’t your in-depth therapy session; but let’s look at a few aspects of trust.

There are two major camps on how we trust people. The first is, never trust anyone until they prove they are trustworthy. The second, trust everyone until they break that trust or give you a clear reason to doubt it. A great read on the subject of trust in the workplace and beyond is *The Speed of Trust*, by Stephen M. R. Covey. Most organizational dysfunction has a trust issue as a root cause.

5 Waves of Trust

Another powerful dynamic on the topic of trust is what is often referred to as the waves of trust. Think of the waves as the rings on the water when you drop the stone in the calm pond.

The 5 Waves of Trust



Wave One: Self Trust

If self trust is not achieved, we can never move forward. Self trust in action looks like the restrictions we place on ourselves because we know ourselves; and whatever that indulgence or temptation is, we know if we partake, it will lead to our destruction. Your local jailhouse is full of people with self trust issues.

Wave Two: Relationship Trust

Relationship Trust is generally impossible to be toxic-free unless the people involved have the first wave managed.

Wave Three: Organizational Trust

Now we can get a larger group of people together and build Organizational Trust.

Wave Four: Market Trust

Now you're humming and becoming known by your peers beyond your organization. They are impressed; they count on you; and it results in Market Trust.

Wave Five: Societal Trust

Finally, once you are trusted in the market you can experience the outer ring, Societal Trust. Unbiased people pick your organization to trust with their time, money and experiences.

Trust is Fragile

As we are all aware though, trust is fragile. Once it's broken, it's terribly difficult to repair. One selfish act, a breakdown in self trust, can send a different ripple through an organization, destroying everything in its path. One lie, one fudged report, one petty theft, one angry outburst, one lazy safety check... devastation.

Pursue the high speed, high trust workplace. Drag the trust issues into the daylight; talk about them. Agree to do better, and hold folks accountable to the high trust standard.

Empowered, high energy, fun places to work are on the jet fuel of high trust. If that's your work culture, protect it! Preserve it and make sure people know it's not magic. It's people who trust each other, and that's the magic.

About the Author

Since his retirement, Dan has embarked on the "give-back" phase of his career: Sharing what 30 years as a park ranger taught him about doing courageous work, forging teams, defending work culture and honing personal resilience. To learn more visit www.danrieves.com