











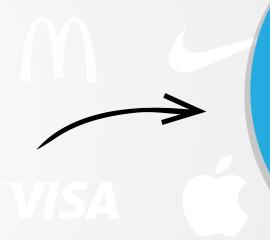








CRITICAL TRAITS FOR BUILDING

















THE GROSSMAN GROUP

DAVID GROSSMAN ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, CSP



PANDEMIC

MRY BE THE NEXT

TO ADDRESS...



Distrust has been running rampant the past few years and shows few signs of letting up.

People are leaving their jobs in droves and companies can't hire fast enough. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, over 47 million Americans left their jobs in 2021, and 10.9 million jobs remained vacant in the final month of the year. As if that's not grim enough, 73%¹ of currently employed workers say they're actively thinking about quitting their jobs. Trust is needed more than ever as companies move past the pandemic and establish their *new reality*. In today's business environment, without trust it's next to impossible to:

HAVE A Hybrid or Remote Workforce CREATE A Meaningful Employee Experience

RETAIN TEAMS AND TOP TALENT MAINTAIN OR Build Your Brand GROW YOUR BUSINESS AND GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT

Whoever said "trust takes years to build, seconds to break and forever to repair" was correct. Working with leaders and teams at many different organizations across industries over the last 20+ years, I've seen how trust opens doors to opportunities and can help people and companies grow beyond their wildest expectations. I've seen leaders and teams work through trust issues and get to the other side stronger and better. I've also seen how business can slow or stop without trust. Those who get it right champion authenticity, empathy and humanity to build strong, trusting relationships, which improve employee engagement, retention and business results.

Let's look at the environment of trust we're living and working in these days, and what leaders can do to build trust inside their companies...

TRUST IS UNDER ATTACK

The increasing lack of trust in institutions is troubling, as reported by numerous studies over the past several years. The 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer underscores the scope of the problem, revealing that trust is suffering among the general population ... trust in government ... trust in media ... and basically everywhere in between.



PEOPLE WORRY

about being misled on purpose by misinformation (up 7 points



for business
leaders, 8 points
for journalists
and reporters,
and 9 points for
their country's
government
leaders)

BUSINESS

is now more trusted than government in most markets, but lost ground in several countries, including the U.S.







distrust others until they see evidence they are trustworthy



believe capitalism (as it stands today) does more harm than good

THE GAP IN TRUST

has hit a record high between high-income and low-income earners (was a 6-point gap in 2012 and is now a 15-point gap in 2022)



WHEN IT COMES TO TRUST, BUSINESSES COME OUT ON TOP

While trust is on the rise for businesses, it is not a panacea for workplace issues, and considering the record-breaking turnover companies are experiencing today, it is *not* a guarantee of employee loyalty.



of employees have left a company because of trust issues1

For the first year in **more than a decade**, employee engagement in the U.S. has fallen. In 2021, 34% of employees were engaged and 16% were actively disengaged in their work and their workplace². But, we know a lot about what employees are looking for from their employers that can help leaders be more effective at building trust and driving engagement...



choose a place to work based on their beliefs and values



believe information they're getting from their employer over other sources of information, including the government and media

Trust in "my CEO" and co-workers is strong (trust in CEOs is 66% **up 3 points** from 2021; trust in coworkers is 74%)



expect the CEO to speak out about societal and political issues they care about when considering a job



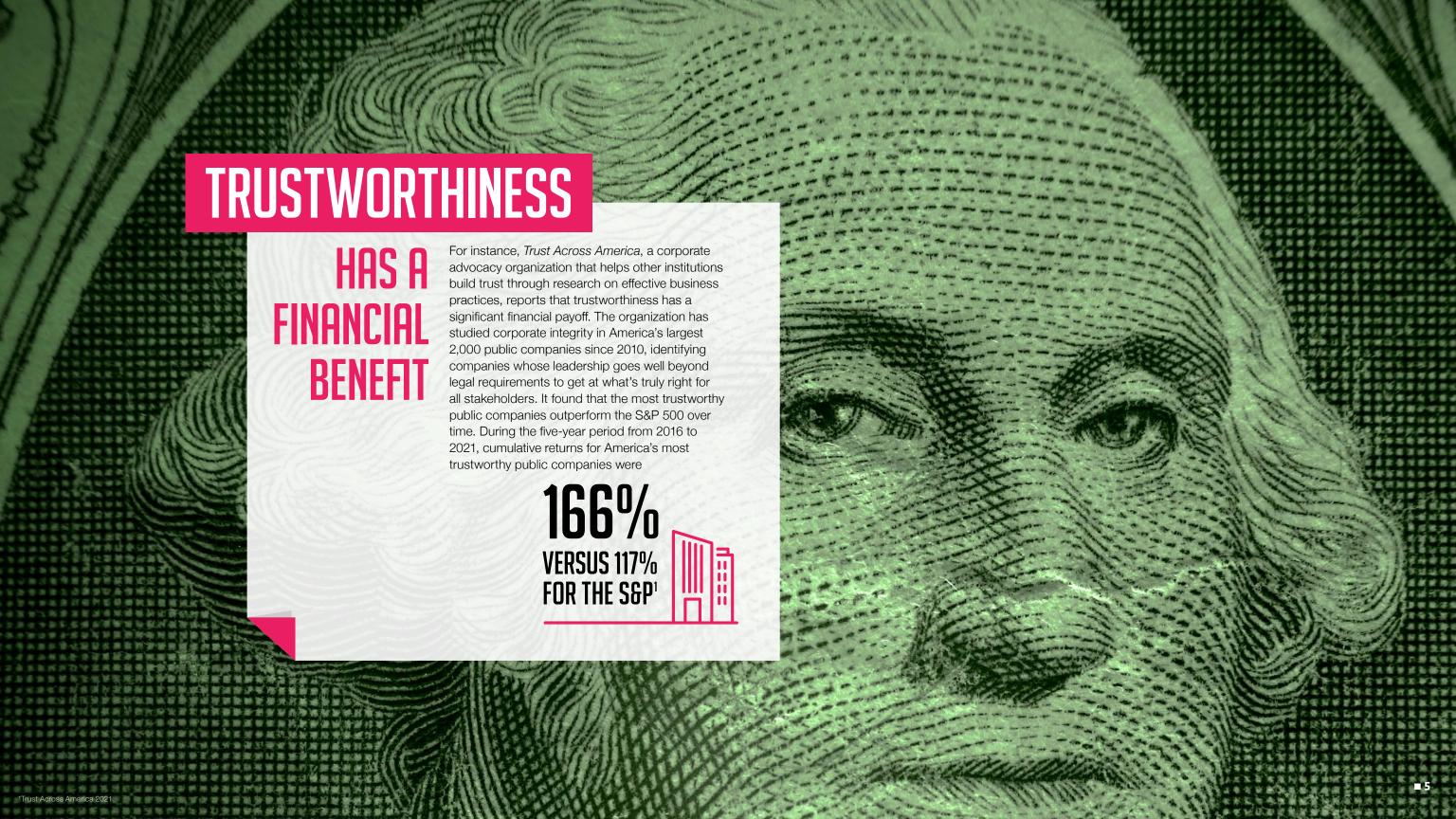
believe the CEO should be visible when discussing public policy or work the company is doing to support societal needs³

Organizations are being challenged to become more trustworthy. We often hear about trust in the context of rebuilding it after a crisis. But to maintain longterm, positive stakeholder relationships, leaders must make trust an intentional organizational imperative.

BARBARA KIMMEL

CEO and Cofounder of Trust Across America

EXIT











CREATING A CULTURE AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION IS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN MANY PEOPLE MAY REALIZE.

It's one of the best ways to protect your company from becoming a victim of the Great Resignation.

In a tight job market where employees have much of the leverage, companies are under even more intense pressure to retain their talent. Employees want to feel emotionally connected to their employer and its purpose. They want an employee experience that has purpose, flexibility, and that represents who they are and what they believe in. Having a strong and supportive company culture and values are often a major reason why people come to work every day—and stay. If you want a high-trust culture, it starts with the CEO and C-suite.

Purpose

noun | pur · pose

The reason for which something is done (or created), or for which something exists.





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A TOP RESPONSIBILITY OF ANY CEO IS TO SHAPE THE VALUES AND STANDARDS OF THE ORGANIZATION. THIS IS ABOUT DETERMINING THE ORGANIZATION'S CORE DNA—WHO IT IS AND WHAT IT STANDS FOR—ESPECIALLY WHEN TIMES GET TOUGH OR A CRISIS HITS.

It's also about living, celebrating and protecting that DNA as if the trust in every employee, customer and shareholder depends on it ... because it does.

To effectively shape values and standards, leadership must be aligned and exhibit the critical behaviors and daily actions central to the organization. *Employees will listen to what you say, but your actions speak much louder than your words.*

Company processes, systems, infrastructure and policies must reinforce what's important and help employees navigate with ease for a better experience.



TAKE AN INVENTORY

of what you and your organization are already doing—and what you need to do—to strengthen your culture and purpose.

LISTEN

to your stakeholders and understand what's important to them and what keeps them connected to your company, including customers, employees, shareholders and investors.

LEARN

from others—especially employees—and help them know that one of your top priorities is to be connected to them.





BRING YOUR STRATEGY TO LIFE

You might have the most compelling vision and values for your organization, but if you can't get it out of your head and get others to see and believe in it, it might as well not even exist. Plus, you need to ensure that the systems in your organization reinforce what's important. In some cases, you may find they reinforce the opposite of what you or your leadership seeks.

Remember that just because the strategy and values make sense to you, doesn't mean it will take only an instant for others to see it like you do. We often think that others see the world as we do, but it's more likely that there's a lot of ground to cover

between their perspective and yours. In reality, employees come to their jobs with their own context, and it's the leader's job to help them understand the collective context, including how you see the marketplace today, and how that led to your strategy.

According to our research, a majority of employees globally don't understand their company's strategy and, consequently, how they fit in. Consider the possibility if even 10% or 20% more employees understood their jobs better. What might the impact be on productivity, innovation or revenue?

It's up to you to engage others so they have the same clear picture as you regarding your strategy and where the business is going. Lift the perspective out of your head and get it into others' heads so they can own it and help you achieve it.



Put the strategy and values on a simple, single piece of paper



Share the strategic framework and ensure your leaders are aligned: give them context so they understand how you got there



Use the strategic framework consistently in your communications with employees so it becomes familiar to them and they see what's happening and how it ties to the strategy



Create a line of sight guide that leaders and employees can use to have productive conversations about how the employee fits in, their overall job and, more importantly, how they contribute

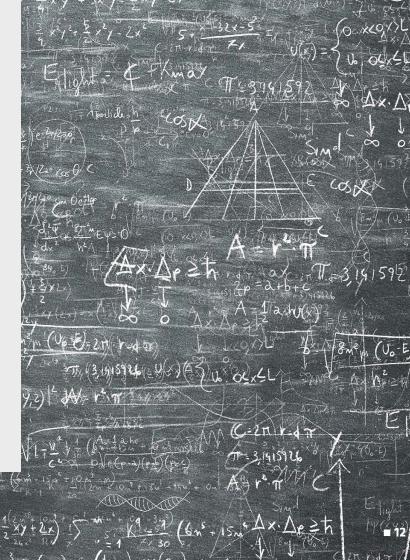


As your thinking evolves (quarterly, annually, etc.), update your framework and communicate regularly so employees are in the loop



Celebrate "wins," always connecting back to and reinforcing the core elements of the strategy and those who are living the values







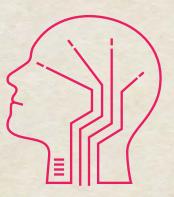
IT MAKES SENSE THAT EMPLOYEES WORK BEST FOR LEADERS WHO ARE PURPOSEFULLY BUILDING AND MANAGING TRUST.

The first step for leaders is giving employees their own trust. Once that's established, employees return the favor by beginning to trust their leaders as well. This comes down to the simple concept of:

Reciprocity

noun | rec·i·proc·i·ty

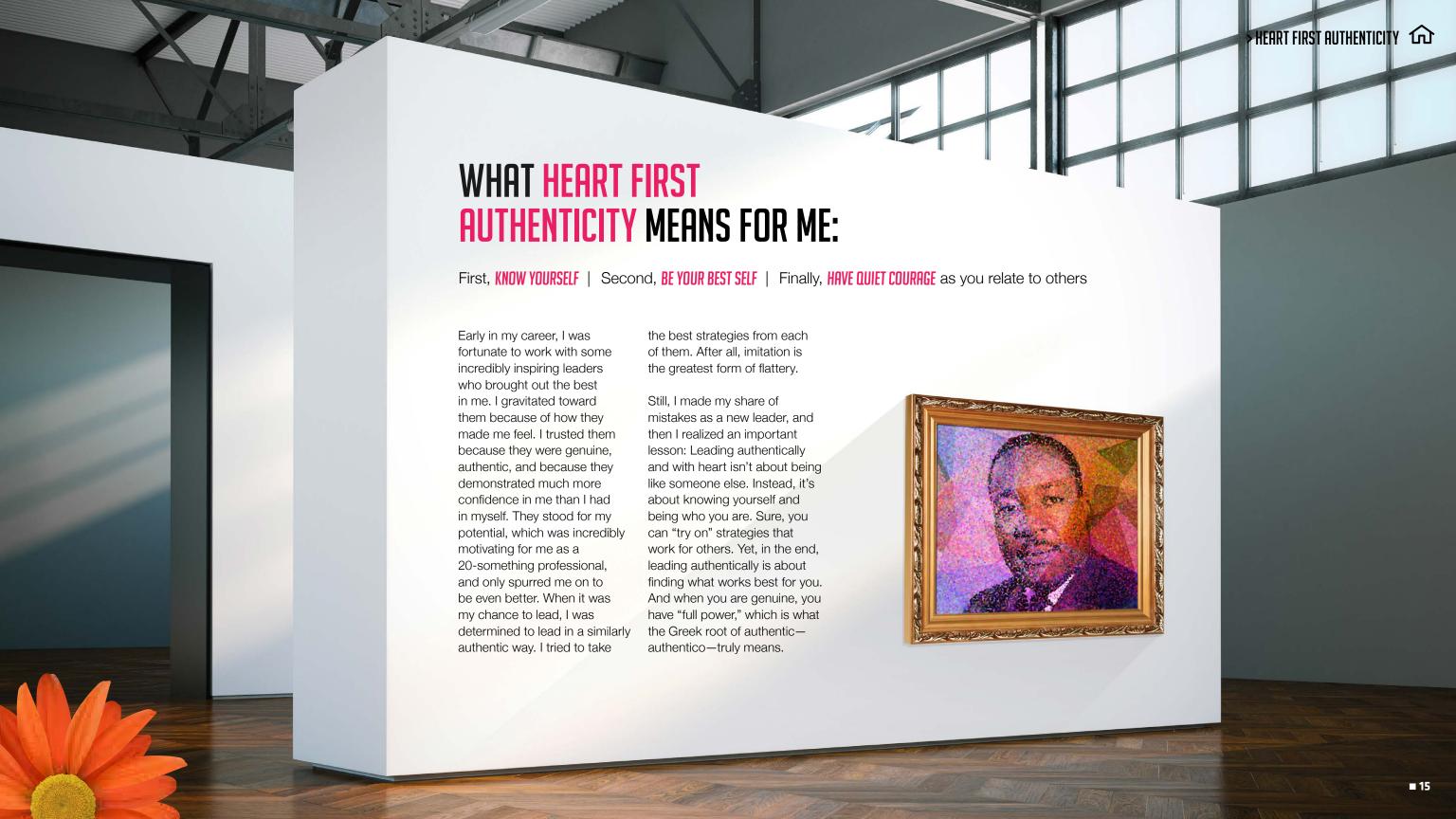
When there is a mutual benefit.



simple example might be to provide an employee with a stretch assignment or work that they've never done before. As you hand over the assignment, you share that you have trust in their abilities and that you're there to support them if they need any help. The message employees receive is that they are valued and trusted to do great work. In return, they'll want to give their best effort to retain that trust.

Authentic leaders, who take a Heart First approach, also know that leadership is about focusing on others, being humble, operating with grace under pressure, and having quiet courage to bring more humanity to the workplace. These types of leaders care deeply about respect but also honesty—getting to the heart of the matter, yet in kind ways. These leaders also look at every interaction as an opportunity to connect with others.

Heart First authenticity has never been more important. One of the biggest changes we see today is that the pandemic has caused many people to reexamine their life priorities, including their relationship with work. In addition to high turnover rates, employers today are also confronting a significant shift in the balance of power from senior leaders to employees, and that means leaders need to focus more than ever on truly listening to what their employees want and need.







How do you do that? Here are a couple of ideas to consider; you choose what's best for you:



Pay attention to what you already know about yourself. Maybe we don't always know ourselves totally, but we can stop and examine an experience we're having and know whether it feels good or bad—and trust our gut feeling on it. As you have experiences, think, "Is this me or not me?" Listen to your inner voice that says, "This isn't me." Get to know yourself as well as you can today...in this moment, and know that, as time goes on, you will change and grow.



Make an inventory. Think about a half dozen instances where you were told or you felt you weren't authentic or weren't leading with heart. Try and get an understanding of what got in the way. Then ask yourself, if you could have a doover, what would you do differently? What learnings can you take forward to help you be more of who you are?



Make a list of people you admire who lead with their heart. Write down what they do that leaves you with such a positive feeling. Try one of those behaviors for a week and ask yourself, "Is this me?"



Get a better sense of your leadership style.

There are a myriad of ways to get feedback.

Do a 360. Myers-Briggs.

Read StrengthsFinder

2.0 or many of the other fine books that include leadership diagnostics.

Use the results as an opportunity to hold a mirror up to see what you can learn further about yourself and how you lead.



Have a "truth teller" or two around you. Each of us has a best friend outside of work who tells us what we need to hear, even when it's tough love. We need the same at work. All of us have blind spots, and it's a truism that the higher you go in an organization, the more the tendency is that people tell you what they think you want to hear, instead of what you need to hear. Truth tellers can help us know what we can't see ourselves.



KEY FACTORS EMPLOYEES CITE FOR EARNING THEIR TRUST:



Be dependable



Be honest



Actively lister



Give helpful feedback



Lead by example



Care about their wellbeing



I don't know who said this, but it's spot on: You can do an okay job of brushing your hair by staring out the window, but you're going to get better results if you use a mirror. Any strategy that allows you to hold a mirror up to yourself can be helpful here. In the end, the more you know yourself, the more effective you'll be.



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The second component is to be your best self and act in ways that are consistent with who you are. This is your own self-awareness as you relate to others. This means behaving in ways that are in sync with your values instead of simply trying to please others.

Early in my career, I often acted as a chameleon and would change my thoughts or feelings based on how I thought others would react to me. Today, I strive to be my authentic self regularly. What it looks like and how I act really doesn't change very much. What does change is how I feel on the inside. When I acted as a chameleon, I did so out of a desire for people to like me. I wanted people to like me. When I relate to others from an authentic place today, I do so with a sense that people will like me. I don't worry that they won't. They might not, and that's their choice—that's okay. I'm not consumed with the need for people to like me.

There's no agenda. I'll let you be you, and I'll be me. If you like me, you like me, and if you don't, that's okay!

How do you know if you're being your best self?

Talking out loud can help you know whether what you're thinking about is in sync with your values. Just being able to listen to ourselves day-to-day allows you to self-correct—because there's a difference between self-talk in our heads and actually saying something out loud and hearing yourself, along with then seeing the impact we have on others.

You need to be able to say, "Wait a minute. I just heard what I said, and I'm changing my mind on that...Or, that doesn't feel like me." Remember, "Is this me or not me?"

You can listen to yourself on your own, or for more challenging topics or situations, enlist someone else to listen to you—not to make suggestions, but to listen to you express your thoughts and feelings, which is one of the many roles a great executive coach or therapist can play. This also can be a best friend, a colleague, partner...the key is that you need to listen to yourself. This isn't about someone else listening to give you advice. They're listening so you can hear yourself and determine what's best for you.



COMPONENT 3

HAVE QUIET COURAGE AS YOU RELATE TO OTHERS

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And finally, the third component—have quiet courage as you relate to others. Heart First authenticity is about this constant process of being truthful—first with yourself and then with others. To say the things that need to be said. And to do it in a kind and respectful way. Being authentic isn't about saying whatever you think or feel. That's going to be damaging to either you personally or to the company. Being authentic doesn't give you license to be an S.O.B. Do you know someone who has a "This is me—like it or not" or "I'm mad and am entitled to yell at people" attitude? Heart First authenticity isn't about doing whatever you want and not caring about the people around you.

Here's a secret that authentic leaders know that other leaders don't: Heart First authenticity is about everyone but themselves. Authentic leaders are sensitive to others' needs. They're looking at the best interests of others. What they're not doing is focusing solely on themselves, and they are careful not to take authenticity too far.

As they share their truths with quiet courage, they flex their leadership style. They consider what the audience can understand, process and make use of. Giving someone information that they have little way to process or to understand can create confusion and anxiety. All this requires reflection on your part before you speak or act. In other words, you have to be planful and purposeful (don't wing it), and that allows you to

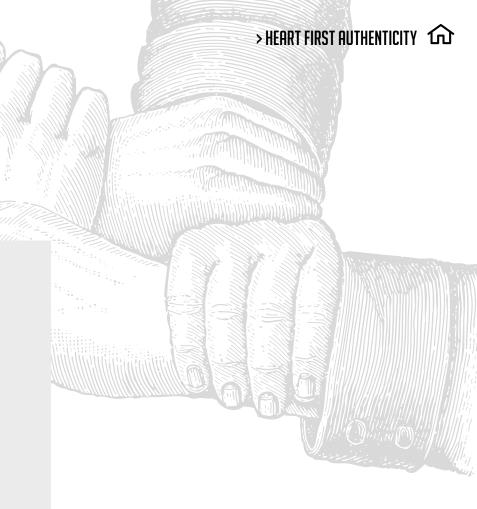
respond in a more grounded way. When you do, you can trust yourself more and be more confident when you know you've thought things through.

From a communication standpoint, authentic leaders understand the audience and context, and then flex their style to meet the needs of their audience. While being audience-focused might sound like Communications 101, it's not common practice. One of the most common mistakes leaders make is to communicate from their perspective. We're all clear in our heads what we think. Moving someone to action isn't about what we think; it's about helping someone else think differently so they then act.

If you're wondering about how you relate to others, one of best ways to know is to ask.

Authentic leaders want to hear feedback and how they're impacting other people. It comes from a place of really wanting to know so they can shift what they're doing to better meet an employee's needs or to better motivate that employee. It's a different way to hold a mirror up in terms of understanding how you impact others by being interested and taking their feedback to heart. I hope you can see why quiet courage, as I call it, isn't Rambo courage, but rather an internal kind of courage that comes from deep inside.







TRAIT 3:

TRANSPARENCY

The company establishes a culture of transparency and places a strong value on telling the truth, even when it hurts.



BENEFITS

OF MORE TRANSPARENT ORGANIZATIONS:



Senior leaders hear the truth,

even when the news is bad, and help their employees process what the news means, and understand whether it requires employees to do their job differently for better results.



Employees are brought in as true partners in the business. When your employees know what's truly going on in the business, they can help you plan and solve problems. Chances are the people closest to a problem already have ideas on how to resolve the issue.



Leaders focus on the

fundamentals. Leaders who always speak the truth, and with candor, can get to the basic questions employees have. Constantly communicating what's going on and why gives employees what they need, such as answers to "Why should I care?", "How does a change impact my job?" and "What's in it for me?"



RUTH

We are honest, ethical and put truth ahead of personal/professional gain

A CCOUNTABILITY

We hold one another accountable and take responsibility regardless of level or role

P URPOSE

We engage our stakeholders to build shared purpose and avoid short-term "wins" that undermine future success

NTEGRITY

Our actions are consistent with our values and build mutual trust and employee engagement

N OTICE

We actively seek out and listen to our stakeholders' perspectives as every voice matters

T ALENT

We understand the importance of diversity, competence and moral character

O PENNESS

We are open and ready to learn—we can also be vulnerable and not have all the answers

T RANSPARENCY

We reject hidden agendas and are transparent wherever and whenever possible

R ESPECT

We respect the dignity of every person and encourage constructive questioning and honest dialogue

U NDERSTANDING

We celebrate our corporate success and acknowledge and examine our failures, learning from both

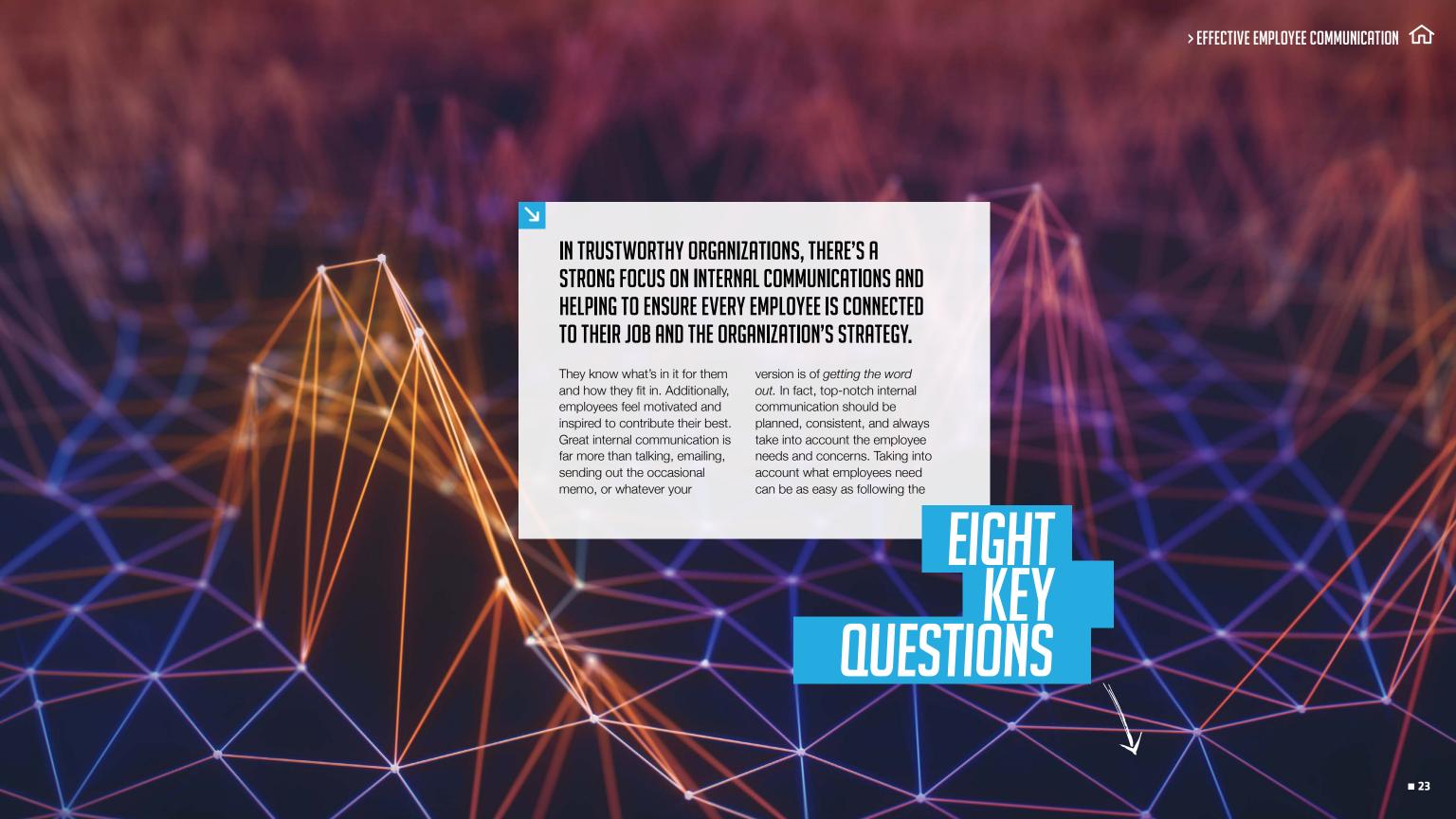
S AFETY

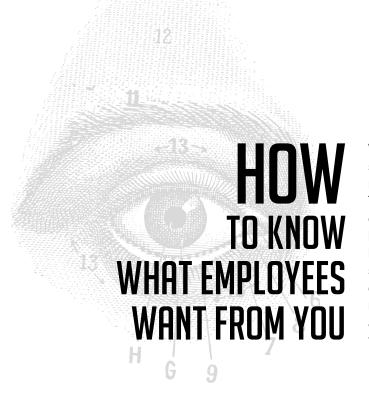
We call out unethical behavior and corrupt practices—we make it safe to be honest with no fear of reprisal

T RACKING

We measure our performance according to our collective purpose and values, sound governance practices and metrics







Whether employees ask them or not, there are several key questions that are on employees' minds—I call them *The Eight Key Questions*. These questions are a lot like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which states that only after a person has fulfilled certain levels of needs can he or she begin to move to more complex levels of thought, such as self-awareness and understanding of others. In other words, employees' basic needs—the "me-focused" needs—have to be addressed first before employees can begin to think beyond themselves. Once employees

feel taken care of, they become more aware of changes or initiatives happening outside their department or function and ask the question, "What's going on?" This is a transitional question that takes employees from "me" to "we." The "we-focused" questions that follow are really about the larger organization. The ultimate payoff is when employees ask "How can I help?" This is an expression of engagement—a willingness to do more—which also demonstrates a strong emotional connection to the organization.

REMEMBER:

These are questions employees think about, and perhaps ask, *every day*—whether they are new to the organization or veterans. When change happens, employees immediately go back to the me-focused questions. Our job as leaders is to get them back to question number eight as quickly as possible ("How can I help?"). If we don't, that's when business often gets stopped, slowed or interrupted, as employees work through—or are challenged by—change.

8. How can I help?

7. What's our vision and values?

6. How are we doing?

5. What's our business strategy?

4. What's going on?

TRANSITION

WE

3. Does anyone care about me?

2. How am I doing?

- ME

1. What's my job?



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SAVVY ORGANIZATIONS KNOW THAT SEEKING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES LEADS TO IMPORTANT OUTCOMES.

s such, diverse perspectives and people are valued and alternative points of view are welcomed. In this type of strong culture, employees begin to feel a sense of belonging, which increases productivity and engagement. On the opposite spectrum, employees who don't feel like they belong often feel disengaged, detached and not invested in the company's success.

Belonging

noun | be · long · ing

- 1) Close or intimate relationship.
- 2) Without belonging, one cannot identify themselves as clearly, thus they can have difficulties communicating with and relating to their surroundings.

oy Baumeister and Mark Leary argue that belongingness is such a fundamental human motivation that we feel severe consequences of not belonging. "If it wasn't so fundamental, then lack of belonging wouldn't have such dire consequences on us. This desire is so universal that the need to belong is found across all cultures and different types of people."



THE IMPORTANCE OF A SENSE OF BELONGING

As a leadership and communication consultant, I work with scores of organizations that want to greatly improve how they communicate and engage a very diverse set of employees, often across functions, regions and continents. That work has shown me that tapping into employees' full potential is more important than ever.

And "employees" means ALL employees. As many research studies have shown, companies can't innovate—a key business imperative—without the benefit of diverse perspectives. You simply can't build new and powerful solutions if everyone thinks the same. Belonging is a basic human need. Everyone wants to belong, and be part of something larger than themselves.

You can be included and still not feel like you belong. This is why far-sighted organizations have moved beyond focusing solely on diversity, or DE&I, to a new, even better goal: diversity, equity, inclusion—and belonging. When you address belonging, you help ensure the best ideas are getting leveraged. The major bonus is that everyone brings their best selves to work and feels engaged to help the organization achieve its goals.

HOLY SHIFT #@\$!!*

With *The Great Resignation*, employees are rethinking how work fits into their lives. They also expect more from their employers when it comes to sharing and representing the values of their employees, including commitments to DE&I.



In a recent study¹, Deloitte explores how an organization's commitment to advancing DEI efforts in the workplace impacts trust within the workforce.

THE GOOD NEWS:



of workers are confident their organization will achieve its targeted DEI outcomes



of workers say that their leaders who make public statements on DEI back their words with action



ENGAGEMENT INCREASES 20%

when employees trust the commitments their employer makes, and the chances they will leave their organization goes down by 87%

HOWEVER:

Losing worker trust in DEI commitments could have serious consequences. If employees couldn't trust their organization(s) to fulfill their DEI commitments:

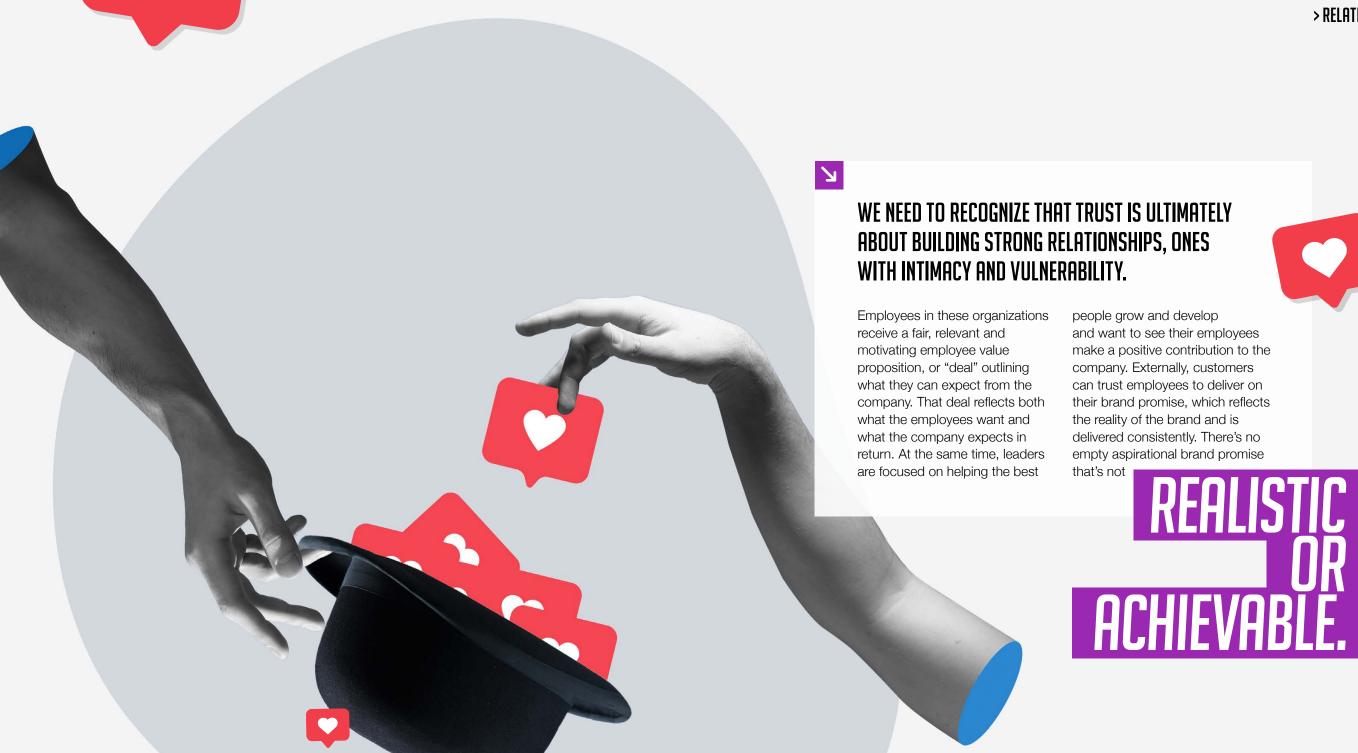
would consider leaving their organization

56%

would not feel comfortable recommending it as a place to work to their friends or family









BE WILLING TO BE VULNERABLE

Share your own story and life experiences, your challenges and the things that matter most to you. Doing so will make your team members more likely to share their stories and journeys. It will also open the door for them to be more comfortable sharing work-related feedback that you can act upon, while also making you more relatable.

UNDERSTAND EXPECTATIONS

People rise to the expectations set for them. Many problems in business—and the lack of trust felt in business—stems from a lack of understanding of expectations or flatout misunderstandings of what's needed and expected.

MORE LISTENING

The best leaders don't talk as much. They ask for input and feedback. It's best to stop the monologues and "talking at" your employees; they want real, two-way conversations.

TAKE ACTION ON SUGGESTIONS

The action may be as simple as looping back with the employee to share appreciation for their thoughts. Help them understand that you are taking action or explain why you're not implementing their approach.

SHOW EMPLOYEES YOU CARE (IN A GENUINE WAY)

Great leaders build trust by finding out what's important to employees and making sure they acknowledge critical milestones. The loss of a close family member, an upcoming wedding, the birth of a new baby, an illness—recognizing critical milestones such as these when you're aware of them truly matters.

SHOW EMPATHY

Leaders who pause and imagine how employees truly feel build a lot of trust. Show them you hear them and validate their feelings. The payoff is an employee who knows you care; at the same time, you gather information that's useful to motivating that employee.

RECOGNIZE / APPRECIATE EMPLOYEES

Saying "thank you" for a job well done goes a long way. Reinforce very specifically the behaviors you want to continue seeing, and you're on your way to a solid relationship built on mutual respect and trust.





CEOs in trustworthy companies translate their vision and strategy in meaningful ways so employees know it, get it, believe it and act on it. These CEOs are not distant leaders; they want to communicate regularly with employees and genuinely connect with them.



TALKSCHEAP

ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO LEADERS AND THEIR ABILITY TO MAINTAIN AND BUILD TRUST.

For employees, it's the actions and results that matter most. Today, employees are putting company leaders at all levels on notice that when it comes to earning trust, they better work harder. Trust is elusive. It takes a lot of hard work to earn and very little effort to lose. a leader—and well worth Once lost, trust can be

nearly impossible to get back. Yet, employees who truly trust their leaders will move mountains for them and are far more likely to be engaged in the business. In short, your work in building trust can be one of the most important things you do as the effort.





CONSECUTION OF THIS ONE...

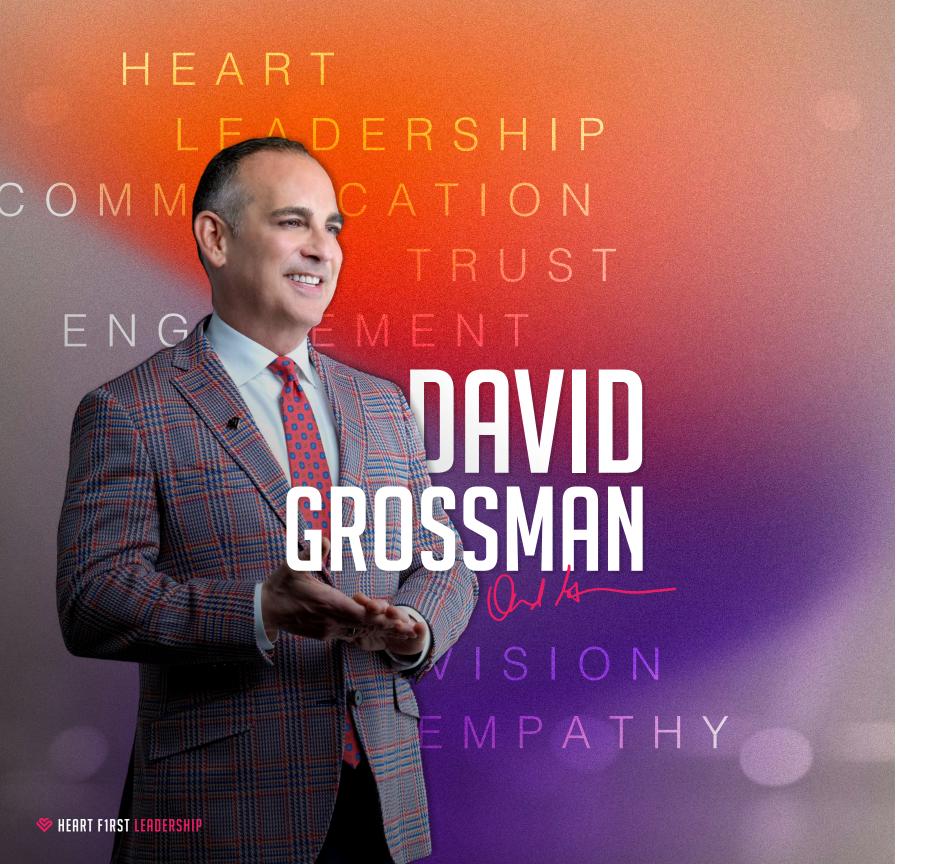












David helps leaders drive productivity and get the results they want through authentic and courageous leadership and communication. He's a sought-after speaker and advisor to Fortune 500 leaders. A four-time author, his latest award-winning book, "Heart First: Lasting Leader Lessons from a Year that Changed Everything," features interviews with 30+ leaders inside a variety of organizations, each of whom share extraordinarily candid insights and unique leadership lessons. His leader**communicator**™ blog is ranked the #1 blog on communication by Feedspot seven years in a row. David is Founder & CEO of The Grossman Group, an award-

winning Chicago-based strategic leadership development and internal communications consultancy. The Grossman Group's clients include DHL, Emergent BioSolutions, General Mills, Kaiser Permanente. Lockheed Martin. Molex, Stanley Black & Decker, and more. David is a member of the Arthur W. Page Society, the Forbes Communication Council, and a Trustee to the Board of the Institute for Public Relations. In addition, he is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), an MBTI® Certified Practitioner, a Prosci Certified Change Practitioner and taught graduate-level internal communications at Columbia University in NYC.

David has been featured in:

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

NIGHTLY **NEWS**

TODAY

Chicago Tribune

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Los Angeles Times

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