

SMALL BUSINESS

Generating workplace trust through transparency

"In the midst of the journey of my life, I awoke in a dark forest in which the true path was wholly hidden."

— Dante

We all at times experience feelings of dislocation, disorientation and discontinuity with the attendant emotions of fear, loss, anxiety, frustration, doubt, confusion and even despair. As Dr. Seuss says in "Oh, the Places You Will Go" — "Sometimes you will be faster than fast.... You will go from success to success.... Except when you won't — then you'll be slower than slow — no place to go..."

The roller coaster of a lifetime means that sometimes we are really down and others really up. Finding balance — maintaining a healthy sense of equilibrium and resilience requires having a core sense of self and identity that goes beyond name, rank and serial number.

Knowing ourselves at a deep level and framing a core sense of purpose provides roots that sustains us and keeps us upright during the storms of change. Leadership transparency is even more critical during times of discontinuity. To create and sustain it requires leaders who know who they are, what they stand for and what they are in service to do.

We are in a time of great social and economic upheaval. In truth, all humans have lived through periods of great so-



IN THE LEAD

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cial and economic upheaval. It seems to be part and parcel of this condition called "life." The lack of leadership transparency, as has been discussed over the prior three articles, is arguably the most significant contributor to loss of faith and trust in institutions, government, industry, organizations and individual leaders.

Where faith and trust are damaged, economic upheaval and destructive patterns of behaviors emerge, damaging the ability to not only get work done, but the capacity for organizational systems to function effectively. The costs of lack of leadership transparency are enormous.

One of the most critical tasks of a leader is tapping into, generating and maintaining a sense of faith and trust in those she or he would lead. During times of great change and dislocation this great task is even more important. What is the best pathway forward in doing so? The answer lies in two key words: "Identity" and "Efficacy."

Identity is that sense of core purpose mentioned earlier.

What do you as a leader "stand for" and "stand on" as you approach your daily life? What is your life and work in service to? Who are you at core? Efficacy is the ability to access talents, skills and processes in order to bring your purpose, service and stand to life and realization.

As a leader, the ways to enable and promote identity and efficacy in order to generate greater transparency with others has a five-fold set of actions.

The first is to provide a clear sense of "direction" — an orientation towards the future that lets those around you know where you are focused on going.

The second is to provide "information" that is honest, clear, direct, frequent and consistent. It is not enough for people to know the direction; they also need updates on progress, setbacks, challenges and a sense of the current reality.

The third action has to do with demonstrating a sense of "caring" for those around you, especially those you would lead. His caring can take the form of support, encouragement and

simply taking the time to connect and listen to concerns, fears and doubts and letting them know they are heard and their feelings matter. An additional aspect of caring would then be offering further clarity on direction and current information.

The fourth action has to do with providing "coaching" — offering input on what they are doing well, where they are succeeding and where the greatest developmental challenges or opportunities exist. Being able to offer some tips, strategies and ideas on how to address challenges is part of this coaching process.

Finally, the fifth action has to do with providing "resources" to move through change, achieve the direction set, address information updates, make course corrections and maintain or strengthen trust and faith in self and others.

Next: Leadership transparency — summary and parting thoughts.

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