

## Openness and Trust

Today's article is dedicated to "Openness and Trust". These two words "Openness and Trust" are intrinsically bound together with each other. Without openness there can be no trust. Without trust, we will not be open with others.

Being trusted is a yearning all of us have. We want to be trusted by our colleagues, our friends and our loved ones. Being trusted by somebody else is a great show of confidence in whom we are as people. It gives us confidence in our own abilities and makes us very comfortable in the company of those who trust us. It helps us to reach our potential. Recall a time when you felt that you were completely trusted. What was it like?

Despite this strong desire to want to be trusted by others, we often find ourselves in an environment in which there is little trust. As adults, we tend to be very careful in whom (if anyone) we place our trust. This leads to the paradox of people desiring to be trusted but not willing to trust others themselves.



It wasn't always this way. We came to the world full of trust in others. One of the more beautiful things in this world is to observe a child's unconditional trust in its parents. Only as we grow older, do we learn to be distrustful of others.

Perhaps some of the caution (not necessarily distrust!) we learn as adults is useful. It prevents us from time to time from getting into trouble. Nevertheless, within an organization, the more trust we can have in our colleagues, the more we will be able to accomplish.

Trust for an organization is like lubrication for an engine. The more trust there is, the better people communicate with each other and the easier it is to get things done. The parts work smoothly in unison. Without trust, there is a lot of friction, temperatures heat up, and eventually the entire functioning of the organization is placed in jeopardy.

What are some of the key elements that help to create trust within an organization?

The first and most important element in building trust is openness. Much distrust is a direct result of misunderstanding a situation or misreading the intentions of others. When we are not sure what is happening or don't understand what others are doing, we tend to become distrustful.

It is similar to small children not wanting to turn off the lights before going to bed. Why don't they turn off the lights? They are afraid. What are they afraid of? Monsters?

When there is no openness in an organization it is like the room for the small children with the lights turned off. We don't know what is out there, but whatever is out there, we need to protect ourselves from it. We tend to make up stories about what is out there and suspect the worst.

That is why in a closed environment, there tend to be a lot of rumours. Since information is either withheld or important decisions are not communicated properly, rumours take the place of facts. Generally, people want to know about the environment that they work in. If they don't have access to information about what is happening, they will make it up.

The only way to bring light into the dark room is to open the door. Openness drives out the darkness and as we once again begin to see the contours of the room, we regain our trust in our environment. There are no monsters out there!

Openness also breeds openness. It's contagious. When we hear other people talking openly about important decisions or activities, we tend to open up as well. It is like a flower which moves in the direction of the sunlight.

To create openness and engender trust, however, we need to communicate often and well.

Perhaps you once played the game of "telephone line". The game starts with someone whispering a message in the ear of the person next to them. That person then whispers the message to the person next to them and so on. By the time the message has gotten to the final person, it often has little resemblance to the original message.

Communication is not easy. Many misunderstandings can happen (which endanger trust). The more often and precisely we communicate, the more we will avoid such misunderstandings.



A final element in creating trust is being patient with other people and not being too quick to judge them. Most people are attempting to do their work as best they can. Perhaps they need to learn to do something better or become aware of other ways of doing it. Or perhaps we don't understand why they are doing what they are doing.

If we can stop ourselves from judging what people are doing and first be curious about why they are doing it, we will take the first important steps towards building trust.

At Bunge we believe that trust is a key component of how people interact with each other. But trust is a precious gift. It has to be cultivated like a field. If done properly, it provides a bountiful harvest, year in and year out.

Cultivating trust involves all people within an organization. In order to get trust, you need to give trust. In whom have you placed your trust today?

© Entheos Group 2004  
[www.entheosgroup.net](http://www.entheosgroup.net)