



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: BEHAVIOR MATTERS

Leadership is the relationship between leaders and their followers, and trust is foundational for establishing "productive relationships." It's why we shake hands upon meeting (no weapons) and why we give "the benefit of the doubt" when forming new relationships . . . and also when building long-term relationships . . . both personal and professional.

In the end, it is all about relationships. You trust me to lead you; I trust you to do your job and help get us to our agreed destination.

Earning trust requires creating an environment in which people feel comfortable giving you direct feedback – they feel they can say what needs to be said and that you will hear them. Trust is earned by creating an environment for meaningful conversation – you listen so that the other person feels heard and respected. It is all about how people "feel" about the interaction with you – their gut reaction is what will make the difference.

Our research, gathered from more than two decades of coaching senior executives and conducting feedback interviews, backs this up. There are strong positive correlations between the independent variable, "[this executive] behaves in a manner that earns my trust," and the dependent variables that are listed in descending order in Figure 1.

CORRELATIONS TO "BEHAVES IN A MANNER THAT EARNS MY TRUST"

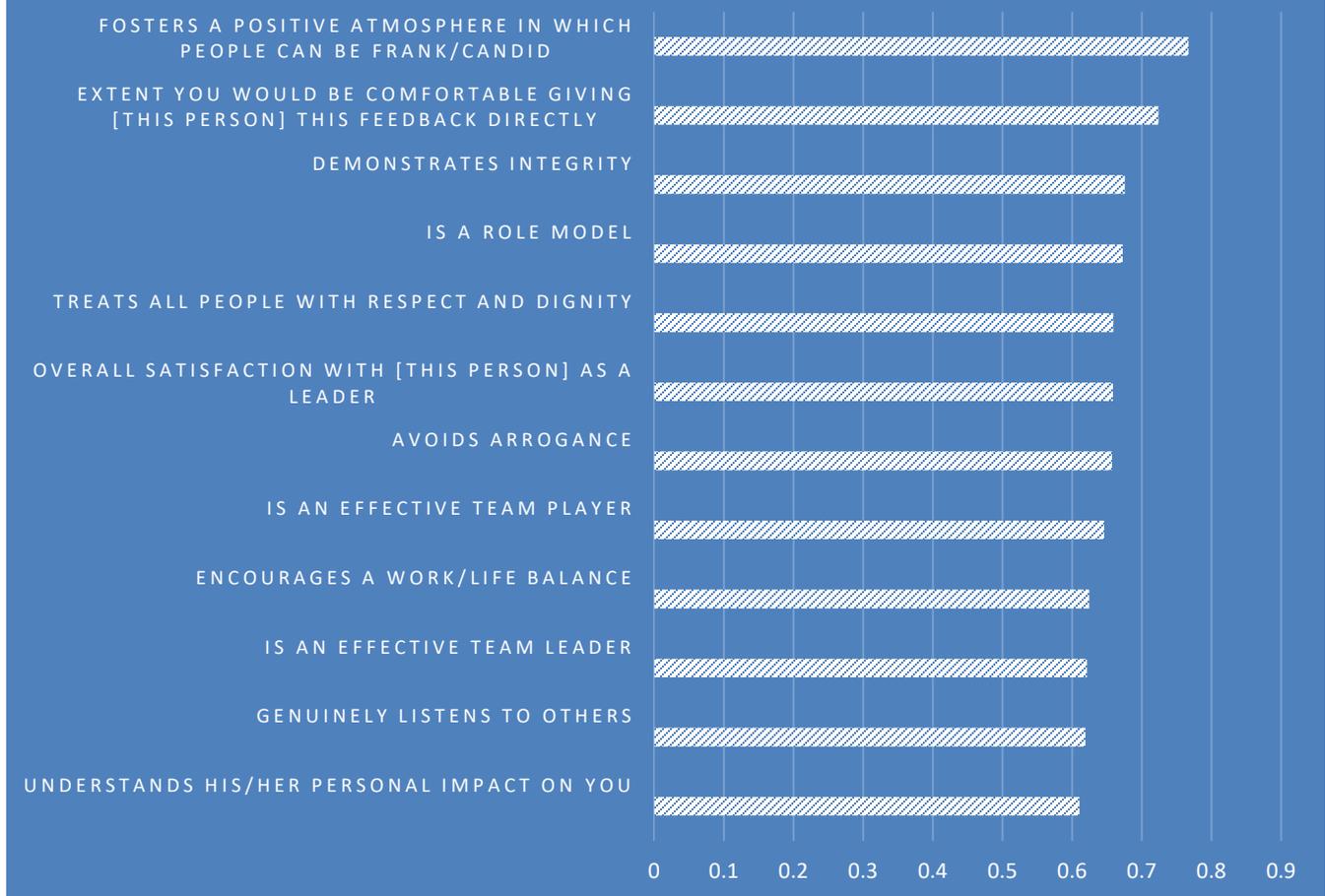


Figure 1 Correlations to trust "behaves in a manner that earns my trust"

Trust is an immensely important issue. Notice that one of the items highly correlated with trust is overall satisfaction with the executive as a leader.

We know that trust in leadership leads to better employee performance. See [Ken Blanchard's recent research](#). Specifically, his study shows that employees who have trust in an organization's leadership are more likely to expend additional discretionary effort, perform better, endorse the organization, stay with the organization, and be a good "organizational citizen."

In *The Speed of Trust* (New York: Free Press, 2006), Stephen M. R. Covey identified the four cores of credibility: integrity, intent, capabilities, and results. He also importantly identified the behaviors that characterize a trustworthy leader: straightforwardness, respect, transparency, righting wrongs, loyalty, results, dedication to improvement, confronting reality, clarity of expectations, accountability, listening first, keeping commitments, and extending trust. These attributes align well with our research.

Leaders who aren't perceived as trustworthy are those who display the opposite behaviors or are *inconsistent* in displaying trustworthy behaviors – they obfuscate, do not demonstrate respect for others, hide the truth, cover up misdeeds, do not attribute credit where it is due, focus on and reward activities rather than outcomes, are not open to feedback, ignore the elephants in the room, fail to clarify expectations and then are disappointed when results fall short, blame others for failures, make decisions without obtaining input, make vague commitments that can't be pinned down, and do not trust anyone else.

Try this exercise: write down names of all your direct reports; put a number from 1 to 5 indicating how much you trust each one. Put a number from 1 to 5 indicating how much you think each trusts you. Then do the same for how effective your relationship is with each one and how effectively each is performing. It would look something like this:

	George	Sally	Joe
How much you trust _____			
How much _____ trusts you			
Health of relationship with _____			
Performance of _____			

More than likely, you will see a correlation amongst these items.

What are the implications for your behavior and how you manage your team? How can you improve any scores that are below a 4 or 5?