12 Final word: the basic laws of trust

This final chapter highlights the basic laws of trust, the characteristics of trustworthy (and untrustworthy) managers, and what it means to be trusted.

THE BASIC LAWS OF TRUST

Self-trust is a critical factor in creating trust

... and distrust is often a projection of absent self-trust. It is unlikely that others will trust you if you do not trust yourself.

Trust is an absolute

There is no such thing as partial trust: it is an ‘either/or’. Either it exists or it does not. We either trust someone or we do not.

Waiting for people to prove their trust does not work

The issue is not ‘can I trust them?’ but ‘I will trust them’. Trust is not only earned: it must be given. If you trust people, they usually live up to it.

Trust can take a long time to build and it can be destroyed in an instant

It can take much commitment, many actions and a long time to create trust – and only one small act to destroy it.

You cannot create trust if you view it as a means to an end

If you try to build trust cynically, you are unlikely to succeed. People who succeed in building trust: care about relationships; make and keep commitments, and value honesty and integrity.
Trust matters

You cannot create trust without respected values
The values of integrity and honesty are the basis of all trusting relationships and high-trust cultures.

Trust is often invisible
We often fail to realise that things are going well because of trust or going badly because of the lack of it. While trust is often invisible, it only exists as the result of constant actions and attention to the relationships and activities that create it. It is only when it disappears that we notice its absence. Its low profile does not diminish its power. In fact, trust often only becomes visible when it has been lost or abused in some way.

Trust requires commitment
Trust does not just happen. It requires commitment, personal responsibility and vigilance.

Trust relies on reciprocal relationships
Trust centres around the virtuous cycle of ‘giving and getting’ interactions. Well-balanced people get psychological satisfaction from being trusted, and, as they are trusted more, so their trustworthiness grows.

Trust opens up possibilities that can never exist without it
Without trust, people and organisations can never be totally efficient, creative and successful, because trust allows people to try new things, disagree with others and say what they want to say.

AND FINALLY
Remember trust is time-sensitive
We believe that trust is fundamentally important, potentially powerful and frequently neglected, but we also acknowledge that it takes time to develop. This brings its own complications. A firm that is trusted by its customers but despised by its employees may think the situation is fine. It is not. Trust and mistrust are like water: they flow, they get everywhere and they can be more powerful than they appear at first sight. Mistrust is especially corrosive so, for example, the firm will soon find that its problems with its workforce are inevitably being transmitted to its customers.