

# JUST TRUST ME!

*Keith Casebolt*

**W**e all want people to trust us. Inherently we understand that in the absence of trust, work is much harder. The lubrication that trust provides makes every interaction easier.

Let's discuss what trust is and is not, and how you can develop more of it.

## FIRST, WHAT IS TRUST?

Consultant Thompson Barton says trust has two components. One is trusting in someone's competence. Is the person able to do the job accurately and reliably? This is critical in ophthalmology. Doctors and staff cooperate, relying on a vast web of interconnected competencies to deliver the best care to patients. Patients want zero defects, from accurate pressure checks to surgery measurements to the skilled hands of their surgeon.

But there's a second element to trust that is also vital. Do I trust your intentions towards me? Lots of teams trust each other's technical competence but lack this element. These situations result in poor communication, CYA activities, talking *about* coworkers rather than *to* coworkers, destructive competition, defensiveness, keeping score, and many other nonproductive behaviors.

An example of the two elements of trust: consider 3-year-old children. You've most likely had some or been around some. They are emotionally transparent. You know exactly what is going on. If they are mad at you, it's clear. If they are feeling loving towards you, they show it. You can see and trust their intentions. However, that's completely different from technical competence. Even if you trust their intentions, you still aren't letting them drive the car. You still hold their hand when crossing the street.

It's easy to identify the consequences of destroying trust. The department store Target has been in the news following the compromise of several million customer records. Sales dropped significantly along with the stock price. Its CEO resigned. It will take a long time to regain customer trust.

## HOW IS TRUST CREATED?

Most of us are already clear about assessing competence. We interview, observe, train, and pay attention to customer and coworker feedback in an ongoing assessment of the technical competence of others. However, the interpersonal piece where I trust your intentions can be more obscure.

There are two basic strategies. There are some people who trust other people

until given a reason not to. These people are probably in the minority. Most of us trust over time as we get to know our team. The comment is often "Now that I know you, I trust you." More specifically, *now that I understand your intentions* I trust you.

Here's the paradox. I only get to know you when you are transparent, which is to say vulnerable. If you are opaque, you are potentially still dangerous, or at least I may still be wondering about you. I don't know what you are thinking or feeling, what you want or don't want. I don't know your background and therefore lack context. Few of us enjoy being transparent with people we don't yet trust. So, often this process takes a while. Everyone thinks "Being vulnerable is a great idea. You go first!"

Speeding up the creation of trust on a team therefore requires what is counter-intuitive. It requires being vulnerable first. If everyone waits for someone else to go first...we wait a long time. This is typical in most organizations. But you can speed up the process significantly.

## A LEADER GOES FIRST

As a leader in your organization, you can create trust by modeling vulnerability. Transparency would look like conversations where you admit when you don't know yet what to do, when you talk about your fears and insecurities as well as your hopes and dreams. It includes saying specifically what

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you are looking for behaviorally and attitudinally in the employees in your organization. Showing vulnerability would also be asking for feedback about how you are to work with and listening non-defensively to whatever you hear. It would be owning up to any mistakes you've made. Then you can ask for the same from your team.

The net result of increased trust is capturing the discretionary emotional

energy of your staff, which can only be freely given and happens when they are inspired by where they work. No one responds well to "Just Trust Me!" High trust is also characterized by a commitment to excellence rather than to being right, and a focus on problem solving rather than on blaming.

A leader is someone who goes first. By modeling transparency, you can reap the benefits of high-performing

teams that trust each other's competence and intentions. *AE*



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online resource is designed to promote excellence and professionalism in ophthalmic practice management; offer continuing education and professional development opportunities for COEs, ophthalmic administrators, and managers; and provide ophthalmic professionals with a study guide to help them prepare for the Certified Ophthalmic Executive (COE) exam. Organized into seven sections, each section contains multiple chapters

that include pre- and post-tests and educational materials. A personalized dashboard allows subscribers to navigate the sections and track their progress. Visit the "Educational Resources" tab at [www.asoa.org](http://www.asoa.org) to find out more about this exciting new initiative.

Regional education was another request on respondents' "wish lists" and the ASOA Board of Directors has heard you loud and clear. Watch for information regarding this initiative in the near future.

The word cloud we've included here summarizes what the survey responders value most about ASOA. Be assured the ASOA leadership and staff are committed to going "above and beyond" to continue to earn your trust as the most valued source for news and information regarding ophthalmic practice management.

And the survey says.....ASOA!

## WHAT I VALUE MOST ABOUT ASOA IS...

