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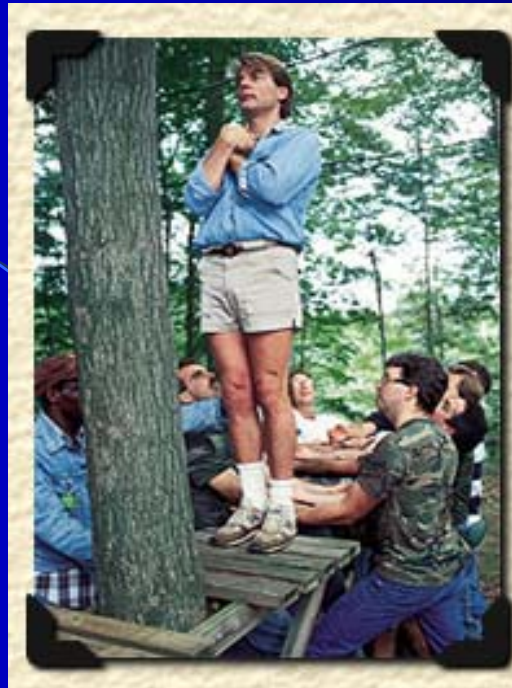
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# **Fostering Trust on Virtual Teams**

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# Images of Trust



What picture do you have of trust?

# Why is trust so important?

- Trust is a cornerstone of effective team collaboration.



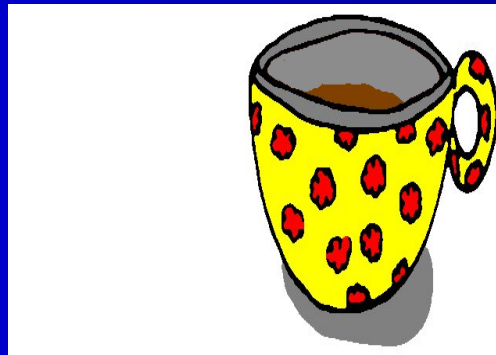
- Sharing confidential information requires trust.
- Trusting the competencies, agreements and decisions of other team members is at the heart of team work.

# Goals for this presentation

- Ask questions that get to the essence of trust issues on virtual teams.
- Discover the role of the leader in fostering trust.
- Share best practices for building and maintaining trust.

# Assumptions

- The topic of trust is complex with many different lenses for viewing the situation depending on your personality, culture, age, past experiences and orientation to others in general.



- Therefore be aware of these “lenses” when you listen to others suggestions on this topic..

# Think of a virtual team when...

- You felt trusted by the other members and you gave your trust readily.
- You felt your trust was compromised by another individual or the team leader compromised the trust of the whole team.



- What were some of the behaviors demonstrated by the leader or team members?

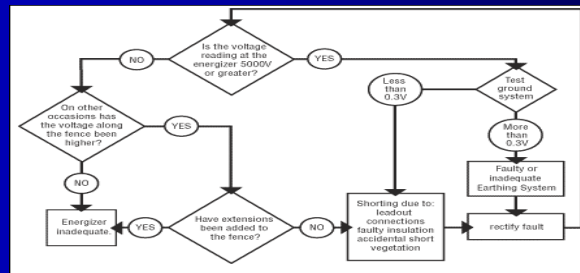
# We tend to trust when someone ...

- Shares the values that we think are appropriate to follow in a particular context
- Is perceived as being competent
- Is willing to share confidences, knowledge and go beyond an egocentric profit motive
- Shows integrity and dependability



# What behaviors facilitate building virtual trust early on?

- Allow for social communication
- Communicate enthusiasm about the team
- Find ways to overcome technical issues
- Involve team members in meaningful tasks the first week



- Add structure to unstructured tasks
- Take individual initiative



# Role of the leader

- Develop a positive social atmosphere
- Walk the talk of your team's values
- Facilitate setting team operating norms
- Reinforce predictable patterns in communication and action
- Call team members on distrustful behavior
- Make explicit how and what information to share with stakeholders
- Share capabilities of the other team members

# What are some ways to start building trust with your virtual team?

- Schedule an online learning course
- Design a virtual “getting to know you event” at the start of the team. Be creative!
- Schedule informal chat sessions with the team and use technology to help
  - Video conferences
  - I messaging
  - Team website with photo and “water cooler like” chat exchanges
  - Foster open honest dialogue and encourage sharing the good, bad and ugly stories



# Example of activity to build early trust

- Leader facilitates “getting to know one another activity”
- Ask team members to submit a symbol or “picture” that personally represents them in some way
- If video conference is available, use real object, otherwise submit a picture or graphic icon
- Leader asks members why they chose their image and what it reflects about them
- Encourage team members to use these symbols as part of normal communication exchanges. Post on team web site.

# Table Activity

- Share a story or experience regarding building trust early on a dispersed team
- Share an experience when you as a leader set the environment for trust to build
- Share from your experience how trust is maintained during the rough stages and ongoing until the project is complete

# Start trust building during meetings

- Create time for social chatting at the start of virtual meetings
- Include creative team building activities into longer meetings
- Share photos of each site's surroundings and the team members in their home site
- Use video conference for informal gatherings, celebrations or project milestones.
  - Use web cams to link the sites.

# What behaviors maintained trust?

- Predictable communication
- Keeping explicit all communication agreements
- Explicit prompt responses to all messages
- Leader emerged based on skills, ability and interest in the role (rotated leadership)
- Made successful transition from social/procedural focus to task orientation
- Able to remain calm during crisis.


**Communication and Trust in Global Teams**  
by Dorothy E Leidner, and Sirkka L. Jarvenpaa

# Rate your own behaviors

scale 1(high)-3(low)

Initiate early and frequent communication	
Solicit team agreements and post them	
Establish professional legitimacy	
Create shared deliverables or tasks	
Encourage cross group conversations	
Facilitate the resolution of conflicts	

# Danger signs when trust is lacking

- Conversations stay on the surface
- Conflict is ignored or denied
  - Healthy debate of issues does not occur
- Agreements are breached regularly
- Decisions are made by vote only
  - Vote is split down the middle
- Check the box mentality for deliverables 
- The frequency of social and task focused dialogue is sparse.



# How to mitigate trust issues

It depends on the situation.....

Some examples:

- If lack of team knowledge or credentials is at issue, ask everyone to share competencies others may not know.
- If confidentiality is breached, leader deals off-line with team member
- Later clarify with entire group what is confidential and what is ok to share outside the team
- Go to the chat room and share some of your lessons learned

# What is true for you about trust?

- I believe, trust cannot be built on a virtual team without a leader who models and fosters trust and a concerted effort by all the team members to maintain it.



- What new idea did you take away that you can try with your own team today?

- Peter Drucker: The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say "I." And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say "I." They don't think "I." They think "we"; they think "team." They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but "we" gets the credit.... This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.

In God we trust, all others we virus scan. ~Author Unknown



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