



PETER BLOCK  
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## Trust In Whom?

Most of the time we talk about trust as if it has its own independent existence. We can build trust; we can destroy trust. This treats it like it is an aspect of relationship and based on how people behave with each other. Are we trustworthy... are they trustworthy? We talk of others violating our trust, often in the workplace it is management who gets more than their share of the blame. We expect leaders to be congruent, to walk their talk, and if they don't, we think we have a "trust problem." Or, if we are the leader, we are puzzled why the employees don't trust us. These frames trust as if it is determined by behavior. I want to offer another point of view.

Trust is more an expression of our own inner world, not an outside-in reaction to people and events as they affect us.

### **Trust is a State of Mind**

Vaclav Havel from his "Politics of Hope" book writes about hope in a way that also applies to trust. Editing him slightly, he says, "I should say first that hope is above all a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope in us or we don't; it is a dimension of the soul, and it's not essentially dependent on some observation of the world or estimate of the situation."

As with hope, trust may be something that we carry within us and is, in many ways, a projection of our own internal struggle onto those around us. If we distrust others, it is that we are asking them to carry a weight that we cannot bear within ourselves.

Trust is more an attitude about myself, an estimate of my own capacities. For example, if I do not trust management, a more accurate statement is that I am not happy with the way I act or I

feel when I am around management. It is my response to their power that bothers me. My caution. My speaking in generalities. My quickness to back down in the face of an indifferent or controlling act on their part. My short-fused cynicism may be more the source of my distrust, than anything they do. Distrust is too often a projection onto powerful others of our own ambivalence.

### **Anytime, Anywhere**

If trust is my goal, then I must come to terms with my own shadow: the power I give to others, the denial of my own ambivalence about participation, the fact I do not walk my talk, have silenced my own voice, have left behind my own faith and innocence. Trust is the willingness to go public with all of who I am. If I could ever really believe this, (rather than write about it), then my “trust problem” might fade. Why we think it is the task of people in power to create a high trust environment, I no longer understand.

I can create a high trust environment any time I want. All I must realize is that I am creating the environment in which I live. We are afraid of being naïve and a fool if we continue to trust in the face of others’ betrayal. Well, what is so great about being strategic and clever? And what is so wrong about being a fool? Maybe being willing to be a fool is the exact means of creating the high trust world that we each long for.

*If you want help creating a high-trust environment anytime you want, check out our newest program, **Flawless Conversations™: Managing Low Trust Relationships**, to learn how.*

### **CONNECT WITH US**

**Beverly Crowell**

Managing Partner

[bcrowell@designedlearning.com](mailto:bcrowell@designedlearning.com)

321.432.3134

Website

