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June roundup

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Inspirations for organizational trust through story-telling: What people talk in work places

People talk a lot about trust in workplaces. Real-life stories are popular and circled around, from mouth to mouth. The words have power. Atmosphere in the workplace develops through stories, as individuals talk about *events, facts, emotions, beliefs, assumptions, etc. experienced in their real work situations*. Stories stimulate feelings, values, desires, capability utilization for goal-setting and performance. Stories help us understand what is really going on in workplaces. Organizational trust strengthens or deteriorates by powerful words told as stories. While reading the brief stories of supervisors and employee below, you may find your own meaning within your own situation inspired by these quotes. Identification with stories help us also understand our varying cultural meanings in more and more multi-cultural business world. We may realize how culture-specifically organizational trust is built, sustained, and how mistrust or trust breaches develop and may be restored.

Supervisor: I lose my trust towards the employees if I notice they haven't done their work or have ignored the way it was to be done. The employees also lose their trust in me if I did not keep my promises. Continuous or excessive monitoring may arise mistrust. Trust declines, if I continuously checked my employee doing his or her job right.

Employee: If trust exists work gets done easier and with more courage. You also learn to trust your superior if you know that she has trust in you. The manager tells me some confidential information and believes that I have kept. I take this of course as a compliment that she tells me this. I create a certain bond with her and begin to build reciprocal trust in her.

Supervisor: I talked about regular jobs with my superiors and they assured me that the employee regularizing was definite. So I made a promise accordingly to temporary workers that their job would become regular. Then, again, we were not allowed to hire new personnel and were in the situation of too few workers. Thus, I couldn't keep the promises I made to my team and subordinates, and, consequently, they lost trust in me.

Vitality through interaction energy

Trust is "tacit", easily breakable and fragile asset. Intrinsically, trust can be built or destroyed by an individual, but he or she alone cannot utilize it or carry its unfavorable consequences since they influence social relationships, and become visible collectively. Organizational trust is usually more tangible than individual and can be sensed, for example, in the culture, atmosphere, systems and in social networks and relationships.

Organizations are in need for vitality to sustain renewal capacity of people for competitiveness. Trustful climate gives birth to vitality and vitality strengthens trust. Vitality is about energy, will, spirit, emotions, activity, influence, collaboration, courage and ability to see opportunities and make changes. Vitality is enabled by different resources such as social and cultural heritage of organizations. Trust belongs to these empowering intangible resources. Trust inspires people and gives work places needed vitality, which eventually stimulates innovativeness for sustaining competitiveness.

Leaders enable and create vitality in the first place. Trust-building is a skill and influencing force for leaders towards employees. Trust creates energy that *enables* growth and vital human capital in organizations. It is manifested in people's enthusiasm as well as their *utilizing of skills, abilities and talents to the full potential*. For example, in change processes people are able to take more risk

while facing the unpredictable. In practice, it means courage and readiness to deal with different opinions, perspectives, and unexpected situations. In trustful atmosphere, conflicts and tensions can also create positive (emotional) energy with active interaction and courage to make a difference.

It takes creativity and flexibility to apply new ideas and make decisions. Trusting relationships inspire the organization to make success just in a time of great uncertainty. When people trust their colleagues, their energy can be focused on the core activity instead of games, politics, control and disputes. Leaders need understanding and new ways to remove cultural obstacles from the way of trust-based leadership. The entire organization benefits when each party invests in trust. The words have power. Let us tell and keep inspiring stories alive.

Taina's Bio:

Taina Savolainen, Professor of Management and Leadership, University of Eastern Finland, Business School; Leader of the research group "Trust within Organizations". Trust researcher and educator of inter-personal trust in leadership and workplace relationships, and Top Thought Leader in TAA-TAW.

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