



istock.com

Does Your Organization Have a Trust Problem?

Published on August 17, 2018



Michelle McQuaid (MAPP) Follow

Workplace Wellbeing Expert ✓ Author ✓ Coach ✓ Teacher ▾ Bring...



20



1



3

Interview with Paul Zak

What do you see when you look around your workplace? Are there faces of boredom and disinterest, colleagues slouched over their work desks, talk of applying for other jobs, or lack of enthusiasm for the projects at hand? Wonder how to turn this around? Could engendering more trust hold the key?

“Building trust can give you supercharged teams and multiply your business outcomes,” said [Professor Paul Zak](#) from Claremont Graduate University and author of [Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performance Companies](#), when I interviewed him recently. “Trust is powerful because it captures what we really want whenever we work in a group – people who care about us and who we care about, and a sense of what we are doing having an impact on the world.”

We are each wired to be social, so how we’re treated and how we treat others at work can have an impact on our brains. For example, Paul [has found](#) that building a culture of trust can make a big difference to your own wellbeing and your organization’s bottom line. When you work in a high-trust organization you’re likely to have more energy at work, collaborate with your colleagues, be more productive, perform better and are less



Join now

likely to leave for other employment. You're also less likely to experience chronic stress, and overall feel happier with your life.

Paul's [research has found](#) that when you experience trust a feel-good jolt of oxytocin surges through your brain and triggers your motivation to reciprocate. This also helps you to actively build relationships at work where you can feel confident that others will do what they say they'll do and that others have your back. So, even when you make mistakes you're comfortable in the knowledge that your hard work is still valued, and your failures are recognized as just an essential part of innovation.

In reality though, often you can be part of a workplace with people you don't know very well and yet you need to work cooperatively with them on projects. The good news is, Paul says that you have the neuro-machinery to form trustworthy relationships quickly if you get the correct neuro-signals and [suggests that there are eight factors](#) that characterize high trust organizations (represented by the acronym OXYTOCIN):

- Ovation - you recognize and praise high performers through formal and informal means. Public ovation releases more oxytocin and can strengthen connections with others.
- Expectation – you design difficult but achievable group challenges to achieve your organization's goals and purpose.
- Yield – you have access to extensive training, so you can do your job well, can choose how to do a task, and mistakes are treated as learning opportunities.
- Transfer – you actively support the development and mastery of new skills and have the autonomy to self-manage into projects you feel committed and passionate about.
- Openness – you are transparent and broadly share knowledge and information, and actively seek and value input from others across your organization.
- Caring – you intentionally build quality relationships at work through showing compassion, cooperation, and teamwork, or through work-sponsored volunteer programs.
- Invest – you value both the professional and personal growth of yourself and others. This can be through self-directed learning, aligning your values with your work, or finding ways to use your signature strengths.
- Natural – being your authentic self at work where you can be open about your vulnerabilities and imperfections and are willing to seek help and advice from



Join now

others. As a leader, this engenders trust only if you are also already seen as competent.

“The neuroscience gives you a framework to understand that you can get the most leverage to create trust by improving these eight factors for the biggest impact on brain behavior,” says Paul.

How can you make this work for you?

Paul gives three suggestions for building more trust in your organization.

- **Measure your trust** – start by taking the free [Ofactor.com survey](#) to measure and get data on how the eight factors are playing out in your culture. In this way, you can use the science to help you engineer more of high-trust, high-performing teams within and across your organization.
- **Be curious about what works** – be prepared to try and experiment with different interventions to build more trust in specific areas. First, identify the business outcome that may be struggling in your organization - for example, it might be employee retention. Then dig deeper into what is causing a lack of trust and affecting employee turnover and identify what you need to do to boost trust. Let people know that you are going to try something new, explain why it’s important for their wellbeing and performance, and see how it goes for six months. Then if it works you can stick with it, if not you can always revert to the status quo.
- **Model trustworthiness** - if you think that trust is important for your organization one of the most important things you can do is to be trustworthy yourself. This means being honest, being open with what you're doing, letting your emotions show, and being vulnerable. When you do this with authenticity others will notice and respond accordingly.

What can you do to boost the trust and oxytocin in your organization?



Michelle McQuaid (MAPP)

Workplace Wellbeing Expert ✓ Author ✓ Coach ✓ Teacher ▾ Bringing out the best in peo...

[129 articles](#)

[Follow](#)

1 comment

Newest ▾



Join now



Christian Taenbergh Jensen

... 1w

Forstå relationers betydning og bliv bedre til at arbejde med dem. Master Positive Psychology Key... The anatomy of trust for inspiration :-)

Like Reply | 3 Likes
