



Building Trust

Ever hear yourself uttering these words, "So why don't you trust me?" Or has anyone ever said to you, "You have to first earn my trust"? The phrase, "once bitten, twice shy," seems to illustrate the cautiousness that people exhibit when this word surfaces in a conversation. We each have probably had several experiences of the fragility of trust and how it often can be broken. So what is trust really about?

Trust is a prime characteristic of Gracious Space and one of the basic requirements for creating and maintaining healthy relationships. Without the presence of trust there is an unwillingness to engage. So what does it mean and what does it take to for us to trust and, in turn, be trusted? One way that trust can be defined and measured is in terms of benevolence and competence. Benevolence is the degree to which I have your best interest at heart and you have my best interest at heart. Competence is the degree to which you and I are skilled and knowledgeable in specific areas. Both of these components need to be present for trust to show up in a relationship. A story from a Seattle-based rock-climber clearly illustrates this point.

"While in northern Scotland, I agreed to climb some local sea-cliffs with a person I had just met in the community. He was friendly and easy-going and assured me that he had climbed before in that area. I looked forward to an enjoyable outing.

I was leading the climb and we were both roped in. As I prepared to secure another anchor point before climbing the next pitch, the narrow sandstone ledge that I was holding on to broke away and I fell. Normally the person below would take the weight of the fall and minimize the distance traveled by holding on to the rope. However, for some unknown reason, my newfound friend panicked as he saw me falling towards him and let go of the rope – causing me to fall onto the beach below. I was very fortunate that day and escaped with only two cracked ribs and some bruises.

So even though my partner was a 'good' person and had my best interest at heart, he had clearly demonstrated a lack of competence. He was like the 'inept ally' who means well but cannot deliver the goods. In rock-climbing there is very little margin for error and you literally have each other's life in your hands. I therefore made absolutely sure that my next climbing partner was both benevolent and highly competent. The incident at the sea-cliffs was a practical lesson about the meaning of trust!"

Trust is a vital ingredient in the psychological soil of group life and its presence creates those conditions that allow us to feel safe in each other's company – inviting us to lower our defenses so that we can wholeheartedly enter that vulnerable space in which learning and growth takes place. Having trust in each other creates a positive field in which concerns can be aired without fear of rejection, dreams can be shared and respected and the seeds of possibilities can be nourished and brought to fruition.

When any group is formed to carry out a task or to explore a specific issue that concerns them all and the members do not yet really know each other, there is an immediate need to establish a degree of trust. So how do we go about this? Discovering commonalities and honoring the



diversity within the group is a very powerful way of initiating this process. The following is an example of one group activity that can be employed to help build trust.

1. Create a circle of chairs (or sit in a circle on the floor) and then invite each person in the group to write a brief answer to the following three questions on a sheet of paper.
"What do you really care about?"
"What do you have passion for and wish to see changed in the community right now?"
"What are you actually doing about this?"
2. Invite each person to take two minutes to share with the whole group what they have written and then have them place their sheet in the center of the circle. Encourage the group to suspend judgment as they listen.
3. Go around the circle again and invite each person to state the core value (or values) that live at the heart of those things that they most care about. The group will then engage in a dialogue and an inquiry to uncover and acknowledge the common values in the room. Once the values have been declared and acknowledged, take time in the group to recognize that each person chooses to live out these values and take action on what they care about in different ways. So although the answers to the earlier question, *"What are you actually doing about this?"* may vary and even appear to contradict each other in some cases, having a common set of values in the room encourages and honors individuality and a diversity of expression.

- Submitted by Michael Lindfield for the Center for Ethical Leadership

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT

Purpose: This exercise asks potential community leaders to look at local concerns and possible solutions to them through the channels and connections of existing organizations.

Process:

1. Fill out section A through C
2. Follow up with group discussion.

- A. List any problems that are of concern in your community. Mark those which concern you directly.
- B. List community groups or organizations to which you belong, indicate in which you are active, and whether any of them could be useful in addressing a community problem identified in "A" above.
- C. Discuss with your group the problem areas and organizations to which club members belong. In what ways can some of the problems be addressed by organizations.



Gracious
SPACE

Preparing to Invite the Stranger

Think of a project you are working on at work, at home or in the community.

1. Do I need the help of other people to make decisions regarding this project?
Yes ___ No ___
2. Does the work require a change in attitude, beliefs, assumptions or behavior?
Yes ___ No ___

If the answer to either question is YES, then answer the following questions. If the answers are NO, then choose another project for this exercise.

3. Who is currently involved in the project?
4. Is this a club of like-minded people or a community with differences?
5. Whose voice is not represented?
6. Identify one or more individuals who would add a valuable perspective to this group.
7. How do you feel about including these different perspectives you just identified? What is your tolerance for difference? Do you truly believe in the gifts this person(s) could bring? Is it going to be a chore to deal with them? What resistance do you have, if any? How can you turn your resistance into an attitude of openness to surprise?
8. What do will you need to do differently (ahead of time or at the next meeting) to ensure this person(s) is heard, and can contribute their gifts and perspectives?
9. Reflect on how others might feel when this person(s), "the stranger," shows up. How can you help them see the value of the new perspective or the missing voice?

WORKSHEET 7 Imagine Your Community's Future

1. Imagine that you are watching a local television news program on this date:

Describe at least three events that could be reported during the program *if current conditions and trends in your community continue into the future*. For example, "Survey results released today reveal that fear of crime keeps shoppers away from downtown."

2. Now describe at least three events that could be reported on the same date *if conditions and trends in your community change in positive ways*. For example, "Today, a revitalized downtown lures shoppers away from outlying chain stores."

3. Meeting with members of your small group, share the events you described.

As a group, select your top priority response to item 1. This represents the condition that your group least wants to see in the future. Describe this condition in the space below.

Select your top three responses from item 2. These represent the conditions that your group most wants to see in the future. Describe these conditions in the space below.

WORKSHEET 8 Rate Tasks

List the tasks to be prioritized in the first column. For each item, check the box under the letters of the criteria you think the item best meets.

Task	Criteria									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Example: Finding a site</i>	X	X		X	X					

Criteria

- A. For which items is there currently a sense of urgency—a feeling that this issue or opportunity needs to be acted on soon?
- B. Which items have already generated interest and enthusiasm in this group or community?
- C. Which items are already being addressed by someone?
- D. If you could achieve or make significant progress on certain items, would this make it easier or more likely for you to accomplish others?
- E. Which items could be achieved with the resources this group already has?
- F. Which items could be achieved with resources beyond this group that could be easily accessed?
- G. Which of these items makes best use of the community’s strengths and assets?
- H. Additional criterion set by the group:
- I. Additional criterion set by the group:
- J. Additional criterion set by the group:

WORKSHEET 16 Social Capital Map

Group or Organization	Strength of Tie	Resources

WORKSHEET 17 Social Capital Analysis

1. What resources do your strong ties give you access to?
2. What resources do your weak ties give you access to?
3. Are there ties you want to strengthen? If so, how will you strengthen them?
4. Are there relevant groups with which you lack social capital (that is, they do not appear on your map)? How will you access the resources of these groups?
5. How can you leverage your ties to have access to more groups, organizations, and resources?