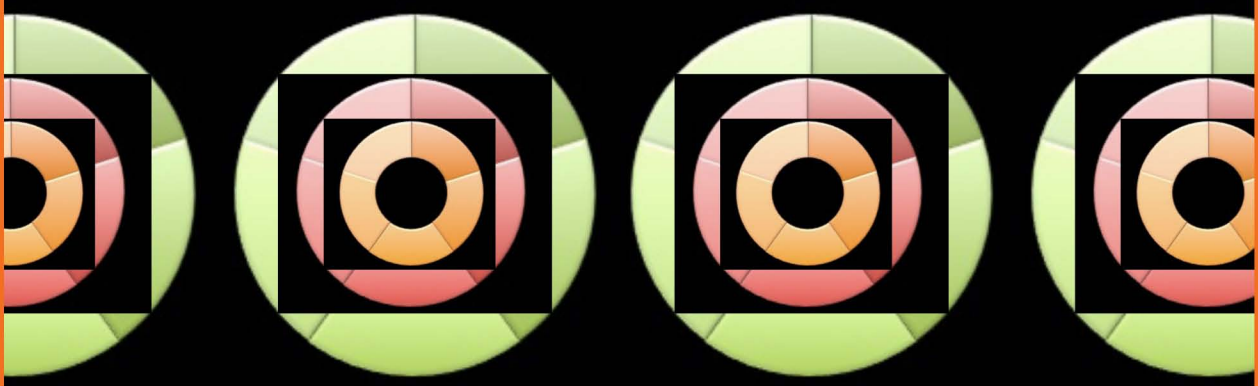


Empowered
LEADERSHIP

ACT! Authority, Competence, Trust



EBOOK

ROBIN DENISE JOHNSON, Ph.D.

EMPOWERED LEADERSHIP

ACT: Authority, Competence, Trust

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EMPOWERED LEADERSHIP
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Empowered Leadership

ACT: Authority, Competence, Trust

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This handbook captures information I teach in executive education programs as part of practical programs designed to help people be more effective at work.

When people ask what I do, I often respond *I help people be nicer to each other at work*. That's true. We spend as much, if not more, time at work as we do at home. And as Confucius says, relationships are relationships are relationships. This handbook deals with work relationships – how to make us more respectful of each other at work. It's my contribution to world peace.

Leadership is a relationship – a relationship between those who choose to lead and those who choose to follow. In this handbook, I will talk about things you can do to make that leader-follower relationship an empowering one when you're the leader and when you're the follower. Most of us are both leader and follower at various times in our work lives.

My focus is practical and behavioral. I prefer to talk about behaviors and beliefs that are fully in your control. So this will be about you – not about them. Sure, if you know me and my work, you know I always aim for inclusive multiculturalism,

but the focus here will be on helping you master your own behaviors and responses – self mastery and response-ability to use Emotional Intelligence language.

When I was researching and defining empowerment for my doctoral dissertation, I learned from the people who participated in that research that empowerment, as they define it in practice, includes three interrelated relational concepts – Authority, Competence and Trust.

- *Authority is the right to make decisions appropriate for your work role.*
- *Competence is the skills you need to carry out your job tasks, as well as the ability to learn to do your work better.*
- *Trust includes fairness in a respectful relationship between you, your managers, your co-workers and your company.*

You have to have all three in the work relationship for people to experience it as empowering. Authority – decision rights; Competence – Task-relevant skill; and Trust – respectful, fair relationships. The three are interrelated, relational concepts.

Authority without Trust, or without Competence feels unfair and too risky – almost like a set up for failure.

Trust without Competence may feel good, but not get the results important for sustained performance.

Competence without Trust makes the work feel meaningless, and makes people feel like machines.

The Leadership Trait questionnaire in the next chapter helps you gain insight into your experience of authority, competence and trust at work. Let's look at the LTQ now.

CHAPTER 2
LEADERSHIP TRAIT QUESTIONNAIRE

Read each question below and put an X in the box just to the right of that question if you believe it applies to you. We are looking for your traits. So put an X if you think the item is true for you most of the time.

SECTION A

1. I enjoy making decisions.	
2. Making decisions is easy and natural for me.	
3. I explore new ideas on a regular basis.	
4. I love to learn.	
5. I am a good student.	
6. I tend to take the devil's advocate position.	
7. I love playing and winning games.	
8. I have a strong sense of what is right and wrong.	
9. What I think matters.	
10. I jump into conversations to ask questions, or to agree.	
TALLY	
❖	
❖	
TOTAL FOR SECTION A	

SECTION C

1. I am the master of my fate.	
2. I focus on tasks completed, more than feelings.	
3. I celebrate when I have just reached a goal.	
4. I love clear beginnings and ends to projects.	
5. I offer advice to people on how to do things better.	
6. People tell me I am a perfectionist.	
7. If a job needs to be done, it should be done right.	
8. I work well to deadlines.	
9. I have won awards and acclaim for my achievements.	
10. What I do, and doing it well, matters.	
Tally	
❖	
❖	
TOTAL FOR SECTION C	

SECTION T

1. My friends tell me I am a good listener.	
2. My behaviors, values and beliefs are consistent with each other.	
3. I respect my own and other people's knowledge, skills, and judgments.	
4. No matter what, I am myself.	
5. I share information so people can make good decisions.	
6. I tell the truth.	
7. I keep my word. If I say I will do it, I do it.	
8. I do not gossip or disclose confidences.	
9. My feelings and your feelings matter.	
10. I give and receive both positive and constructive feedback well.	
TALLY	
❖	
<i>Additional points for Competence-based</i>	
❖	
❖	
❖	
❖	
<i>Additional points for Character-based</i>	
❖	
❖	
<i>Additional points for Communication-based</i>	
TOTAL FOR SECTION T	

Scoring the Leadership Trait Questionnaire

Once you have completed the questionnaire, tally the number of items you selected in Section A. If you selected item number 1 in section A, put an X in the associated column next to item 1. Do the same thing for all the other items in Sections A, C, and T. Add up your total number of X's for each of the three sections. Put that number, which will be something between 0 and 10, in the relevant row that says Tally for each section. You may have somewhere between 0 and 10 in the Tally row for Section A, between 0 and 10 in the Tally row for Section C, and between 0 and 10 in the Tally row for section T.

CHAPTER 3

AUTHORITY

Section A is your Authority Quotient, *your propensity to seek and use your decision-making ability and position power.*

While all the items in this section represent attitudes, behaviors, and traits associated with an interest in developing and using authority, I'd like to focus on two items in particular.

If you selected item #1 in Section A: *I enjoy making decisions* – give yourself 10 more points.

If you selected number 9 *What I think matters*, give yourself 10 more points.

You could therefore have up to 30 points for your Authority Quotient.

Let's talk a bit about decision-making and item #1.

Managers and leaders must make decisions on a regular basis. If you don't enjoy making decisions, it could be challenging for you to be in either of those roles. You may prefer being a teacher, coach, or individual contributor – all also offer potential to make a positive difference at work.

People who enjoy making decisions and trust their thinking tend to seek out opportunities to do both. If you are committed to making decisions for other people, and you intend to develop your decision-making skills, it is important

that you are aware of some of our human tendencies when it comes to certain decision-making biases.

Decision-making is a complex process far less rational than many of us would like to admit, especially in the workplace. And making a bad, poor, or unethical decision is far more common and easier to do than we might like to think. Ethical decision-making is making a decision where there is arguably some degree of uncertainty or risk. As a decision-maker you must assess whether the information available to you is complete or ambiguous. And no matter what information you have you are likely to use your values, your preferences, and your filters in regards to information you consider relevant for a given decision. Social psychological research cautions decision makers to be aware of how they actually make decisions rather than how they *should* make decisions.

CHAPTER 4

DECISION-MAKING BIASES

Let's talk about a few of the biases that are common in work decisions. Economists, who have a lot of influence in business, would argue that *Humans are (or should be) rational actors who make decisions to maximize personal utility.*

Psychologists say *NOT!*

Bounded Rationality. Most of us make decisions with bounded rationality rather than perfect rationality. *Bounded rationality means that although we want to make a rational decision, we cannot because of our information processing limits, so we select from a couple of acceptable alternatives now.* We make a satisfactory decision, rather than an optimal decision. We are willing to accept a less than perfect decision (sub optimize) in order to get some decision made. Often the cost, as we see it, of no decision is so great for the individual, team or organization that delaying the decision would make any decision, even the best decision, a worse result than making an OK decision made now.

So most people make decisions using the *garbage can model of decision making.* A problem may be identified but it is not necessarily analyzed carefully, only one or two easily accessible solutions are identified, and then we pick the OK one from those.

We intend to be rational. We want to be rational. But for a wide variety of reasons we usually are not – at least not in our decision-making. Why not?

Social Comparison. It may be because social comparison causes some dissatisfaction. What's social comparison? *I want what Jimmy Jones has or else I'm not satisfied, even if I got exactly what I asked for before I knew what Jimmy Jones had.* Our satisfaction with what we have is relative.

In one research study, for instance, people were given a raise in two situations. In situation 1, you are given a 7% raise and your colleague is given an 8% raise. In situation 2, you are given a 5% raise and your colleague is given a 4% raise. *Which situation would make you happier?* people were asked.

Most people surveyed said situation 2 made them happier. Why? Because they got more than their colleague. Even though they got less than they did in situation 1 from a financial standpoint, there was more value in doing better than the colleague from an emotional-attitudinal standpoint. So, money isn't everything. Winning -- being seen as better than the other -- has a lot of value for people – especially if you believe you've done a better job and so that's the fair thing to do is to give you the higher raise in comparison to your colleague. We'll get more to perceptions of fairness later.

Obedience to Authority. Then there's this phenomenon called *Obedience to Authority.* *We are much more likely to do what someone in an authority position tells us to do than we think we are.* This finding starting with the famous Milgram studies in

the 1960's, and has been replicated over and over again with different races, ages, genders, etc. and the findings about our obedience to authority remain incredibly robust. Knowing this means that if you seek position power you also have a responsibility to not ask people to do unethical things.

Self-Serving Bias. Self-serving bias is *our tendency to see things and explain things in a way that preserves a positive view of our selves.* We tend to look for information that confirms our point of view, rather than disconfirms it. And we are much more likely to recall evidence and ideas that support our point of view than evidence that refutes it.

Not losing is more important than winning. Another psychological decision-making bias is that people don't like to lose. We don't like to lose time, money, self-respect, approval, or anything of value to us. Social psychological researchers say that people dislike losses about twice as much as they like identically valued gains. What? That's right. *People place more value on losses than they do on gains.* Losing \$30 is about twice as bad as the joy of winning \$30. The psychologists claim this is because when we become associated with something we endow it with greater value simply because it's ours. An implication of this tendency is that people will make decisions to *protect* something that's theirs that they would not make to *gain* the identical thing.

As a result, we are more likely to make a poor decision that would help us keep something we have, than to make a good decision to gain something of equal (or even greater potential) value. This phenomenon explains a lot of the resistance to change that you are likely to encounter as a manager or leader. Therefore when

managing or leading strategic change, you need to account for this kind of resistance.

Conformity, Peer Pressure. Another reason we might not make good decisions, is our tendency to what the psychologists call conformity in the social psychological arena; and what we call peer pressure in everyday language. *Conformity is the tendency to do and say what 'everybody' around you does and says – even when your eyes, ears, and heart may tell you something different.* We take our cues about appropriate behavior in any given situation from other people around us. Peer pressure increases when we identify strongly with the person-people near us and conform even more when the majority includes authority figures (building on the obedience tendencies described above). When we make a poor decision because *everybody does it* we're bending to peer pressure.

These biases have impact for diversity and inclusion efforts. A few of the diversity and inclusion issues we try to eliminate in the workplace are related to these psychological decision biases.

- Quick decisions and sticking to them despite different data helps us understand stereotyping;
- Self-serving bias and social comparison helps us understand micro-inequities and aversive racism;
- Obedience to authority and conformity explain silent collusion – not speaking up when others are discounted even those we don't like the dissing.

Awareness and a willingness to accept responsibility for the impact of your decisions are the best ways to adjust for these decision-making biases when you are the authority figure.

- Seek and learn from people with different perspectives,
- have a sense of history and its consequences,
- become familiar with a wide range of options, and
- develop your critical thinking and conflict management skills.

And then, when it's all said and done, you have to believe that what you think matters.

CHAPTER 5

COMPETENCE

Tally the items you selected in Section C. You could have up to 10 points for this section.

This is your Competence Quotient, *the propensity to seek out and complete tasks to high standards.*

As I did in earlier, I'm going to focus on two items within this section.

If you selected item #9. *I have won awards and acclaim for my achievements* give your self ten more points. Acclaim could also mean you've been recognized in your profession, acknowledged by your peers, received consistent feedback about your accomplishments and expertise, etc.

Item #9 is really trying to correct for biases some people have around competence. Some of us think we're awesome but that's a view not shared by some of the people who work with us. Some of us have competencies – skills, abilities, talents – that we take for granted and only notice when we receive some award or accolade.

Item #10. *What I do, and doing it well, matters* is a definition of high achievement orientation. I'll talk more about that in a minute, but if you selected item #10 in the C Section give yourself another ten points. The maximum total is 30 points for your Competence Quotient.

Seeking and completing tasks to high standards is highly valued and rewarded in our organizations. The question, and challenge, is whose high standards?

If you seek and perform tasks to *their* high standards – you could be a perfectionist.

If you seek and perform tasks to *your* high standards – that's achievement orientation.

The two are vastly different in their impact on you, the people who work with you, and your organization. As an aspiring or actual leader, you want to be able to differentiate between perfectionism and achievement orientation. You want to diminish perfectionism and increase achievement. Let's go into more detail about that.

CHAPTER 6

ACHIEVEMENT VS. PERFECTIONISM

Achievement orientation is a high INTERNAL standard of excellence.

High achievers tend to set realistic goals and take steps, one at a time, with their eyes on the prize – to achieve those goals.

Perfectionism is an unreasonably high standard of excellence – usually generated by ideals external to you and your experience.

Perfectionism is often tied to emotional feelings of low self-worth and a need to prove your self to others. Perfectionism is hard to release because most people see it as a positive trait and many of our organizations reward perfectionist behavior when we're individual contributors. It becomes even more of a problem as you become a manager or leader.

Perfectionism is strongly correlated with poor health, heart attacks, stress, even early death. And perfectionists tend to be trying to prove their worth to others. It's that other-directedness rather than self-directedness that is the problem. The standard of excellence is external, rather than internal. And their feelings of self-worth are tied to what you do and trying to get flawless results.

What's worse, is that when we measure for managerial effectiveness, perfectionists tend to rate significantly *below* the

average as seen by others (even though perfectionists themselves tend to rate their own effectiveness highly).

Their own perfectionism creates this perception gap - this gap between seeing themselves as high performers and other people seeing them as low performers. That gap fuels a defensive system that is an emotional and physical mine field.

Perfectionism is correlated with physical illness that is 7 times the normal rate. The perfectionist

- works too hard,
- demands too much of them selves and other people,
- usually believes they're not good enough and that nothing they do is good enough,
- are often overly controlling and obsessively concerned with details - micromanagers.

Micromanaging. The word we use a lot of times for perfectionists is micromanagers. People hate being micromanaged. According to some researchers this is the 3rd worst characteristic of jerk managers. Micromanagers' fears

- slow down decision making,
- create extra work for them and others,
- undermine credibility of direct reports,
- devalue people,
- keep folks from feeling responsible, accountable, empowered and fulfilled, and
- make people afraid of making mistakes or disappointing you.

And perfectionist-driven micromanaging is very common. One 2005 survey of companies around the world found that more than 2/3 of managers and leaders were too micromanaging.

OK – maybe you don't think it's you. I didn't think it was me. But most micromanagers don't know they're micromanagers and many are clueless as to how demotivating, disempowering, and angering micromanagement feels to co-workers and would-be followers.

Shifting from perfectionism to achievement orientation. Making the shift from perfectionism to achievement is not always easy, because for many of us those two are both rewarded and they seem close together.

1. *First Things First.* Covey talks about doing things that are important to you in his book, First Things First, being able to distinguish between what's important to you vs. what's important to them, and then focusing on what's important to *you* – not on what you think you *should* do, or what others want you to do - as good first steps in making that shift from perfectionism to achievement. That helps to shift to your own intrinsically motivating work. And by the way, doing what's internally, intrinsically motivating is the path to career happiness. (I talk about that a lot more in my book, Career by Design).
2. *Small Steps, Small Wins.* To be more achievement oriented make goal setting a habit, but then spend less time talking about your goals and more time taking the steps you need to accomplish those goals. Go for small wins – take small,

moderate risks, listen to feedback, admit your mistakes, correct those mistakes (that's called learning), and then keep going for your goal.

3. *The Done List*. In my own life, I shifted from perfectionism to achievement orientation by changing one big habit – instead of a huge, never ending to-do list, I now do a monthly *Done!* list. That's right, I keep track of what I've gotten done in a month. For a recovering perfectionist, focusing on what I've achieved vs. what I have *not* achieved is a big behavioral and mental shift. And a relief. The done list should of course include things that are contributions and accomplishments that are important to you. It's a bonus when they are also valued by your organization. That's a career sweet spot – doing what's intrinsically interesting and important to you and valued by your organization. When you find yourself doing something just because you can and they want you to (whoever *they* are) you're on the slippery perfectionist slope.

CHAPTER 7

S.M.A.R.T.E.R. GOALS

In addition to the Done! list, to shift from perfectionism to achievement orientation, I added setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals to my skill set. S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals and the Done! list are a super combination for recovering perfectionists who still want to be high achievers. My acronym S.M.A.R.T.E.R. has

S for Specific,
M for Measurable,
A for Attainable,
R for Results-oriented,
T for Timed,
E for Enjoyable and
R for Reinforced.

Specific. The specific work goals should flow from your job description and performance evaluation criteria. If it's something you're hired to do, or will get fired for not doing, put specific actions within your control on your goals list.

Measured means having some quantifiable metrics. At the very least you need to know if you've done or not done something. Many managers have relationship jobs and find it difficult to know how they're performing because they have no relevant metrics. Yet numbers are the language of business. Even if you have a job that quantifies your contribution, we sometimes choose to measure the wrong things because they're the things easiest to measure. Measuring the right things is both a science and an art.

If your contributions and efforts towards achieving goals are not easily quantified, I strongly encourage you to invest some time, energy, and thought into *how* you know whether you've achieved something, and *how* you know if your efforts made a positive difference, and *how* you know which of your actions are effective and which are not. You'll be more motivated and much more clear about what to do.

And remember, what you do should be focused on the intentional use of some skill or competence that helps you achieve a result. At the very least you can measure actions you take – like the phone calls you made, the people you've contacted, the meetings you've held, or time you spent researching an issue. Quantify and measure the actions you take to make a contribution in your organization.

Attainable means that the goal is actually possible – not some pie-in-the sky, B-HAG – Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal. This is the perfectionists' trap – setting unrealistic stretch goals that almost no one achieves. By definition perfection is not attainable.

Results-oriented means you want to know what your contribution to the company is. In work life you don't get an A for effort. It's about actually accomplishing things through your goal-directed effort.

Timed is so you keep your focus. The time frames will vary from person to person, company to company, organization to organization and goal to goal. I strongly recommend that you do not set work goals for longer than a year. Most of us cannot

sustain our efforts for longer than that. But you don't want to change goals daily either. Most people find a mix of monthly, quarterly, and annual goals work well.

Enjoyable. E is not in the old SMART goals acronym. E stands for enjoyable. What we know from motivation research is that if you don't actually enjoy doing something, if don't have some intrinsic satisfaction that motivates and sustains you, the activity is likely to drain your energy over time.

Doing it for others approval, or for status, or money – the external rewards – is that perfectionists pit again. Don't fall into it. If you're not enjoying what you're doing, even if you're good at doing it, try to train someone else to do it and delegate that task away.

The risk in doing something you don't enjoy – and doing it well – and getting rewarded for doing it – is that you'll end up getting more of that, you might even promoted for doing that, and then you're be drained more and more over time.

I talk a lot more about this in Career by Design because it's one of the biggest mistakes a lot of people make. They are able to do something and therefore they do it. Then they find themselves stuck in jobs where they're doing what they can do, rather than what is intrinsically rewarding and emotionally satisfying for them; something that's enjoyable.

Reinforced. Finally you want to reinforce goal-directed behavior. For you as an individual that might mean rewarding yourself for doing the things you set out to do. When you're

clear about achieving goals through your efforts, it's also easier, and more effective, to have performance evaluation sessions and to you negotiate for organizational reinforcement – that might be recognition, promotion, etc. While you're not doing it *just* for external reinforcement, it's fine to get external reinforcement for achieving organizational goals.

Shifting perfectionist energy towards self-actualizing and achievement energy and using the Done! list with S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals is much more likely to enhance your performance, reduce your stress, and improve your relationships (at home as well as at work).

In my coaching and leadership development work, I've noticed that members of many U.S. ethnic minority groups - African-Americans, Latinos and Asians - tend to over-value Authority and over-estimate the importance of the title, position, and role. It takes time for them to notice that Authority is not sufficient power to lead effectively.

And all three groups have cultural scripts that lean towards perfectionistic competence – in part based on historical intercultural relationships. I strongly encourage you, if you are member of those groups, or you have those strong perfectionist tendencies, to shift your attention towards achievement orientation, because achievement orientation is going to help you be more effective, happier, and healthier. Achievement is important for both individual and collective advancement.

CHAPTER 8

TRUST

While trust was a key part of my empowerment research, I adapted and integrated Erika Hayes-James' model from the Darden School at the University of Virginia into the trust quotient I use here. Look at your items selected in Section T.

This is your Trust quotient, the propensity to relate to others in ways that gain their confidence.

Trust is most important when there is risk – and for our purposes that risk could be resource-based, physical, relational, or reputational.

As in the other two sections, tally the number of items from the 10 you selected in Section T. You could have a score from 0 to 10. Now add to items to get to our total of 30.

Erika describes three aspects to trust: Competence, Contractual (I call this Character), and Communication.

Competence-Based Trust is the degree you respect and have confidence in other people's knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgments.

This is whether you believe others can carry out their work duties competently.

If you selected #3 in the T Section *I respect my own and other people's knowledge, skills, and judgments*, give your self an extra 4-points for Competence-based trust.

I can't tell you how often people complain about their managers, saying to their managers *you hired me to do a job, just tell me what to do and let me do it*. This comes back to that micromanaging people hate. It is so important to hire competent people, develop or train them so that they're even more competent, but then let go and let them do their work. Competence-based trust is one the easiest forms of trust to give and receive. Work-relationships will improve dramatically by deciding to do this one.

The second kind of trust is closer to what most of us think of when we're deciding 'can I trust this person'. Erika calls it Contractual-based trust; I call it Character-based trust. *This is whether you see yourself as a person of good character, virtuous, willing to do your best, to keep your word, to fulfill your promises, to carry out agreements, to act with integrity, and to do so in ways consistent with your values.*

Of course we're asking you how you see yourself, and that's only half the story. It will also matter whether others see you this way (and whether you see them as being of good character). The following four items clue you into whether you are doing behaviors that are common ways people decide about your character at work.

If you selected item #2 *My behaviors are consistent with my values and beliefs*, then give yourself two more points.

Consistency between values, beliefs and behaviors is what I call integrity. Of course, you need to know what your values and beliefs are. And then you have to monitor your behaviors so that they are consistent with your values and beliefs. So, if you selected this item give yourself 2 additional points in Section T.

If you selected item #4. *No matter what, I am myself*, then give yourself two more points again. If you're yourself people begin to feel your authenticity and that makes you more trustworthy. So far you could have gotten 2 more points for item #2 and two more points for item #4.

Item #6. is *I tell the truth*. This one is fairly obvious.

If you lie people won't trust you.

If you keep silent, doing what I call a lie by omission, people won't trust you.

If you fog, you tell partial truths or partial lies, people won't trust you.

So if you tell the truth, give yourself 2 more points.

You might be interested in knowing that lying in its various forms was the second most common characteristic of jerk managers.

Item #7 is *I keep my word. If I say I will do it, I do it*. If you selected item #7 give yourself two more points.

To summarize, if you selected items #2, #4, #6 and #7 in section T on the Leadership Trait Questionnaire give yourself 2 points for each of those items you selected. That means you could have a maximum of 8 points for character-based trust.

For many people character-based trust is the most important and most difficult aspect of trust.

The third aspect of trust, *Communication-based trust* is how willing you are to share information, to share difficult truths with people, to disclose things that are important to you, to give and accept feedback (positive and constructive), and to maintain confidentiality.

Just as in the other cases, you can give yourself extra points.

Give yourself 4 more points in Section T if you selected item #5. *I share information so that people can make good decisions.*

I once heard an academic colleague talk about Mushroom Management; the art and science of keeping your people in the dark. A lot of us do that. He was referring to secrecy, forgetfulness about things people may need to know, or that common need-to-know habit in some organizations – *I'll only tell you what and when you need to know it.* People are asked to do things based purely on authority, without any explanation.

Now I was born a *why?* child, according to my family. *Why?* was my first and favorite response to any request, or order that I do anything. I'd say *why?* And it turns out that answering that question well, *why?* is pretty important for other people too.

When you want commitment and high performance in the work place you need to answer *why is this important?* Leaders and managers may set the direction, the parameters, and the

boundaries for a task, but they will not get alignment and engagement, to use the current buzz words, without discussing and answering the why? question. *Why is this important? Why is this strategic? Why is it important for me to do this?*

Answers to these questions are important to get strategic alignment – to get personal motivations aligned with organization goals. The most effective leaders figure out how to explain the mission and vision in diverse, wide-ranging ways. They answer the *why?* question in lots of different ways. And they make the time to do so.

The manager that's in so much of a hurry that they can't explain is likely to have problems during implementation of a decision. When you don't bother to engage and explain, you see people dragging their feet, chipping away in small ways as you try to get the mission done, or they may even overtly resist whatever it is you're trying to get done.

While it's very helpful to have the *why?* discussion, it's also important to let people know how much room they have to contribute to the decision, if any. If you set some parameters – and most leaders do, usually around resource constraints such as time, money, people - you should let them know what those constraints are. If you have made up your mind made up about certain aspects of a mission, let people know that too, so you don't waste their time, or yours, going down avenues that are not open for discussion.

So give yourself 4 points if you selected item #5.

You can get 4 more points if you selected item #10. *I give and receive both positive and constructive feedback well.*

Many managers give only constructive or negative feedback, they tell you what's wrong - what's wrong with you or your work, what's not working - rather than ever giving you any information about what's right. They often assume if you're doing it right you get to keep your job and that absent comment is sufficient feedback. (Note that this all-too-common practice involves an assumption that the absence of critique is equivalent to giving positive feedback. This assumption is erroneous, and not effective). And some give that criticism in public, humiliating ways. Belittling others – in public or private was the most offensive behavior of jerk managers.

It's important to pay attention to what people do right and to let them know that. I'm always on a mission in my books and programs to encourage people to pay attention to what people do right and let them know. Many of us have been trained to manage by exception - focusing on what's wrong rather than what's right.

Instead you have to train yourself to notice, to pay attention, and to reinforce what people do right. Your attention is reinforcement. Paying attention to only what's wrong also makes your day suck, as well as theirs. Having to give only negative feedback is one of the reasons why most managers hate giving feedback.

And please don't do the feedback sandwich. The feedback sandwich is when you say to someone, (a bit of bread) *Here's what you did well* and (the protein) *here's where you need to improve* (you spend a lot more time going over the need-to-improve) topped off with (another piece of bread) *oh by the way good job*. Folks only hear the criticism - the middle of the sandwich.

Separate your positive feedback from your constructive feedback. And when you give constructive feedback tweak the positive to make the constructive seem doable. You don't want your feedback to be asking them to do something impossible, like be you. Feedback is a whole relational skill in itself and I go into more detail about how to give motivating feedback in my Multicultural Teams programs.

OK. In the Trust section you can also have up to 30 points – 10 points for the 10 items plus 4 extra points for Competence-based trust – that makes 14points, plus 8 extra points for Character-based trust to make 22 points, and then 8 extra points for Communication-based trust for a maximum of 30 points.

CHAPTER 9

BETRAYAL

Trust is one of those big words, like love, that is used a lot but means very different things to different people. It's really helpful for you to know what you mean by trust when you use that word, and to make sure you're talking about the same thing when you talk about trust with others.

So many relationships fail because of unmet and unexpressed expectations. Others violate our trust, but we've never even given them a chance to earn our trust, or to keep our trust, because we haven't clarified or communicated what trust means to us.

Trust's opposite, *betrayal*, is an actual or perceived violation of our VABE's – Values, Assumptions, Beliefs and Expectations.

Often we don't know what are values, assumptions, beliefs and expectations are until they have been violated. Some betrayals are intentional and some are unintentional. Some are minor and some are major.

Minor, unintentional breaches of trust might be dropping the ball on something you agreed to do for a colleague, or 'forgetting' a commitment, or being late for a meeting where others are waiting for you (wasting their time). Most people will forgive you for a few of those.

Examples of minor yet intentional betrayals include gossip or taking credit for things you don't deserve. When it's

intentional, people may not forgive you, depending on their VABEs. Also forgiveness may depend on the degree of harm or perceived frequency you have of doing this. Some folks might limit their interactions and choose to trust you, but only so far.

Major, yet unintentional breeches of trust include things like delegating a task to someone who doesn't have enough decision-making authority, so they feel set up. Or maybe they don't have the resources, or skills to get something done; again that feels like a set up. Or downsizing, where people get laid off, could also be a major yet unintentional breach of trust.

Major yet intentional betrayals include unfair decision-making, disclosing confidential information for personal gain, or sabotaging somebody else's work. People have to work to forgive those.

While there are trust violations, or betrayals, that are contractual in the work place, the 'contract' is most often a psychological one. There is an entire branch of research that talks about psychological contracts.

You can take the time to know what your VABE's are. Being transparent about your Values and walking your talk increases trust.

- ✓ Knowing what your Assumptions and testing them to make sure they're shared can increase trust.
- ✓ Mapping your Beliefs and changing them when you get new, disconfirming information can increase trust.

- ✓ Having high yet realistic Expectations because people rise to your expectations, and communicating them while giving people a chance to meet them, can increase trust.

Trust is a verb – It's something you do.

Trust is a noun – the result of something you do.

You can choose to trust – or not.

You can choose to try to force people to earn your trust – or not.

You can choose to never forgive a betrayal – or not.

You can choose to be trustworthy using these behaviors and traits as guides, or not.

Trust is relational.

Trust is in the relationship.

If you lose trust, the relationship breaks down. You can't have a meaningful relationship with someone you don't trust.

Yet you can choose to distinguish the type of trust you give co-workers – competence based, character-, or communication-based trust - or any blend and degree of those three that works for you.

You can trust everyone the same, or everyone differentially.

Trust is the glue of relationships.

And the fastest way to get trust, is to give trust.

CHAPTER 10

MULTICULTURAL TRUST

In the workplace, the main thing that kills people's trust, is perceived unfairness. Because I also do multicultural inclusion work, I thought I'd take a bit of time to talk about this issue of perceived fairness at the societal level, not just at the interpersonal level.

Many times an issue will present itself as being about individual or interpersonal conflict around money or promotion. But when we look more closely we see that in the multicultural arena, it's also about perceived fairness –equal pay for equal work – no matter what package the person comes in. We've heard this from women, racio-ethnic minorities, people new to companies, new workforce entrants, different generations, immigrants, etc.

The fastest way to kill trust in the workplace it to be, or to be seen as, unfair. So be scrupulously fair in everything you do from hiring, to assigning work, to firing.

Fair does not treating everyone the same.
Fair is not ignoring task-relevant differences in performance.
Fair is taking into account those individual differences and competencies and making decisions that include them in your overall assessment when making your hiring decisions, your job assignments, or firing people. And then you need to communicate about the decision-making criteria you are using in order to manage the *perception* of fairness.

In a workshop I did with multicultural women for Working Mother Media, we asked participants to discuss their trust issues within their racio-ethnic groups and polled them about their trust of other racio-ethnic groups. Remember, this is conversation with practitioners and these comments that follow are things I'd like you to think about. In this case, I'm not talking about individuals, nor am I talking specifically about you, or someone you work with. I do think it is helpful to consider what was reported because it may help you test the trust levels in your own intercultural relationships. These are conversational starting points.

When we did this polling we noticed that the stereotypes within the US seemed to work *against* African-Americans and Latinos for Competence-based trust; and to work *for* Asian-Americans.

Latinas talked about *respeto* and working hard; and African-Americans talked about the Black tax – having to work twice as hard as anyone else to be seen as competent.

Both Blacks and Latinos felt that they did not get competence-based trust – that managers and colleagues would often micromanage them. And even if they did their jobs extremely well and thought they deserved promotions, they didn't get them. They reported seeing their white counterparts getting a chance through a promotion, rather than having to prove they could do the job before they even got promoted.

While Asian-Americans felt being seen as really competent was a good thing, they also reported that they were not fully trusted and included in the team if they were not seen as having the same values. So they were not trusted, they felt, on the basis of contractual-(character)-based trust.

African-Americans reported felt they trusted others quickly but they rarely got it back. They felt they always had to keep earning others' trust.

But the African-Americans in this group were surprised to learn that they were the most highly trusted group in the sample because they were seen as being very honest in their communications and character.

It was disheartening for the white women to find they were the least trusted group in this poll. When we discussed this result because it was a surprise for many of these women, people reported that white women tended to see themselves as trustworthy but they were seen by others as making decisions based on their individual impressions and personal relationships without regard for collective impact and their perceptions of fairness to all. The reports were that because they wanted to see themselves as kind and caring, and to maintain a positive self-perception, and because the white women had good intentions, the white women were unaware of the negative, cumulative impact of their decisions. They sometimes used their innocent intent to defend their positive self-concept, and then to resist, or deny the negative impact of their decisions.

Men, across the board, reported they felt they were seen as *guilty until proven innocent* when it came to being trusted. They felt they were not trusted until they proved themselves trustworthy. In many cases this was based on both contractual and communication-based trust. Men were seen as benefitting from systems where they gained unfair benefits just for being men.

Men and white women were believed to have information and power, and were seen as withholding information or making decisions were sometimes seen as unfair at the collective level, even if defensible and understood on an individual basis.

The comments from the last three paragraphs are explored more systematically by Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami and Hodson in their research shared in the article *Why Can't We Just Get Along? Interpersonal Biases and Interracial Distrust*. The authors review a series of studies that illustrate how what they call aversive racism, can shape different perspectives in ways that undermine racio-ethnic relations at work. The research demonstrates how subtle, often unintentional, and unconscious behaviors can do systematic damage by fostering intercultural miscommunication and distrust.

Trust is the glue that makes relationship work. Trust involves risk. Trust, and mistrust have economic impact on our organizations by affecting our reputations, turnover, organizational memory, morale, work speed, etc. Forget commitment if there's no trust among co-workers. And from research we know that retaliation and absenteeism are high, and costly, whenever trust is low.

Trust is about high-quality, fair, respectful relationships.
Make the time.
Give your resources and attention to people you value.
Decide to trust.
Work on trust in your interpersonal relationships.
Work on trust in the multicultural-intercultural relationships.
You now have lots of frameworks for doing this.

CHAPTER 11

SUMMARY

As you build on your leadership traits and develop your leadership skills you might want to work towards maximizing your points for all three aspects of empowered leadership in the Leadership Trait Questionnaire: An interest in seeking and using decision-making authority; a high performance standard for accomplishing tasks, and respectful relationships with others that inspire their confidence.

The items you did not select on the LTQ provide you with potential actions and aspirations to guide your leadership development plan. In most cases you want to have every item selected. The exception would be perfectionism in Section C – item #6. Perfectionism can be deadly for you, and for motivating those who work with you.

Empowered leadership requires you to ACT – to have and give Authority, Competence, and Trust.

Your responsibility is to use your authority to make decisions in as unbiased way as possible, knowing that your decisions affect people's lives in significant ways.

When it comes to competence, you want to encourage others to do their best, without micromanaging them to paralysis by going for high achievement of shared SMARTER goals, rather than perfectionism. You give trust to get trust.

Trust is a decision. At the very least you can hire and train people and then let them do their work – competence-based trust. You can walk your talk, be authentic, tell the truth and keep your promises – character-based trust. And you can make the time to share, engage and align your goals, their goals, and organizational goals. That time invested by engaging people who have a stake in the decisions pays off in better, faster, more reliable implementation – and a workplace that is more empowering for you and all involved.

We spend a lot of time at work – and working with other people can be the most frustrating and the most rewarding part of our lives. You can make a positive difference by doing your part to make your leadership ACT empowering – for you, and for everyone you work with in your organization.

Peace!

About the Author

Robin Denise Johnson is a Harvard Business School trained Ph.D. who wrote an award-winning dissertation on diversity, work-life balance and empowerment. She has been an executive educator and author in leadership development for decades. She works with individuals, corporate managers, team leaders, non-profit directors-managers, and entrepreneurs.

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