

The One Thing that Changes Everything - Trust

by Art Deden

As a professional you're constantly faced with decisions that make a lasting impact on the growth and welfare of your patients, practice, team, and your future. Who should you hire for that important position? What new systems should you adopt to increase productivity and efficiency? What issues does your practice face and how should they be addressed? While it's important to have a healthy amount of trust in yourself to make the "right" decisions, it is equally important that you gain and maintain the trust of your team to support your vision and your patients to accept your treatment.

In his highly acclaimed new book *The SPEED of Trust: One Thing That Changes Everything*, author Stephen M.R. Covey says it best, *"Once you really understand the hard, measurable economics of trust, it's like putting on a new pair of glasses. Everywhere you look, you can see the impact -- at work, at home, in every relationship, in every effort."* But, do we as dental leaders really focus enough on understanding our own trust level for and with those around us? I am not so sure. If you are an exceptionally trusting person, you might find it odd that we even need to think about this topic. Conversely, if you are a skeptical individual, you might find yourself more inclined to suspect the motivations of others. No matter what end of the spectrum you are on the issue of trust, it's important to understand for yourself how it impacts your daily operations and even your bottom line.

Some dentists develop a kind of tunnel vision and often forge ahead with a project forgetting about the importance of "buy-in" and level of trust the team has for the project and the dentist. Other dentists may continually "shoot holes in the ideas" of others without an understanding of how it impacts the team. Sometimes, we don't even trust our own ability to accomplish the task at hand. So what are some ways that we can foster trust both in ourselves and with our teammates? Here are a few places to start:

- **BE SINCERE** - You can't fake trust. If your team believes that you are genuine in your intentions, they're going to trust you more quickly. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable demonstrates the humanness of us all and builds trust with our staff.
- **BE COURAGEOUS** - Make the effort to confront concerns teammates have sooner rather than later. And once the concern is on the table and you've come to a conclusion on how to move forward - be accountable for your commitments.
- **BE UNDERSTANDING** - Taking the time to actually listen to your staff and respond to their concerns will ultimately help build a stronger bond of trust between you and your team.

Clearly, this advice only scratches the surface. The first step, however, is to create some awareness within yourself, your team, and your practice. Building trust with others, whether it's with employees or patients, is an essential element to your success.

The “cost” of low trust shows up on your income statement (not as a line item you can see) and it can be very expensive! A high level of trust, however, can be a dividend that shows up as improved communications, increased collaboration, better execution, heightened loyalty, greater fun, stronger partnering, etc. Do you *behave* in high-trust ways? Do you talk “straight” with your team, your patients, yourself? Do you keep commitments? If not, what structures and systems are rewarding that low-trust behavior? And what can you do to create changes?

Trust is the one of the cornerstones of your life and affects everything you do. I urge you to read Covey’s book...it helps every leader truly understand how trust is the foundation for any true and lasting success.

Questions to Ponder:

1. Am I honest with myself about the trust factor in my own leadership?
2. Am I part of a team that is open, confiding, tolerant, unsuspecting, and believing in one another?
3. Do I extend trust to others or do I prefer to trust only myself and a few choice others?
4. Do I practice accountability by taking responsibility for results and not blame others or point fingers?
5. Do I confront reality or skirt the real issues by burying my head in the sand?
6. Do I clarify expectations with my team?
7. How would my teammates, my patients, my family rate their trust level for me?

Continued success to you and your team!