

The Qualities of Trust

David Horsager discusses the traits of trustworthy leaders



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“**F**undamentally, I think a lack of trust is the biggest cost we have,” said keynote speaker David Horsager, bestselling author of “The Trust Edge.”

Horsager pointed to Volkswagen’s emission scandal and swimmer Ryan Lochte’s blunder at the Rio Olympics as examples of where a loss of trust cost millions of dollars. In the business or school setting, Horsager said that when trust increases, employee outlook, morale, motivation, and retention also increase.

To build and maintain trust, Horsager discussed his eight pillars of trust: clarity, compassion, character, competence, commitment, connection, contribution and consistency.

When it comes to clarity, Horsager said leaders need to have a clear and practical vision of how they are going to accomplish something. “There are three key questions in establishing clarity: How am I going to get there? How am I going to get there? How am I going to get there?” Horsager said. “If you don’t have a how, nothing changes.”

To emphasize the importance of competence, Horsager gave an example of a dentist. They can have clarity, compassion, and character,

but, unless they also have competence, you’re not going to trust them to fix a cavity. More importantly, Horsager said, people trust those who stay fresh, capable and confident in their professional roles.

Exhibiting commitment to your role also helps build trust. “People trust those who stick in the face of adversity,” Horsager said. “Think of those people who have had a lasting legacy in this world ... The thing they have in common is that commitment and sacrifice were central.”

In the case of leadership, Horsager added that leaders need to exhibit and model commitment before they can expect their teachers or community members to show commitment. “Trust isn’t given, trust is earned,” he added.

Exhibiting commitment can also help a school district or company that has lost trust. Horsager said that demonstrating commitment is the number one way to regain trust. “The only way to rebuild trust is to make and keep a new commitment,” he said.

Not surprisingly, “connection” or an ability and willingness to work with others is also crucial to trust. “We trust those willing to work together,” Horsager said. He dis-

cussed research that found that the most magnetic trait a person can have is gratitude. “If you build gratitude into your home, your classroom, or your school board, all the negativity goes away.”

Horsager said the “king” of the eight pillars of trust is consistency. “For good or bad this is why we like McDonald’s,” Horsager said. He added that this is why we don’t like the moody person who can be unpredictable. In a school setting, he emphasized the importance of holding all teachers and staff to the same consistent standards. “Consistency and sameness are trusted,” Horsager added.

Horsager concluded by saying that every leadership issue related to trust can be solved with one of the eight pillars of trust. He also added that modeling these positive traits can not only impact and improve trust in your school district, but can also improve a school’s culture.

“The impact of your schools, as much as things are changing, is still the major impact on the community,” Horsager said. “You have a greater opportunity to affect and effect positive change than anyone else.” ■

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