# Good Work Design: Building trust in your team

**Australian Government**
**Comcare**

## We know that trust is a key element that underpins success at work

People who work in high-trust organisations report greater engagement, productivity, energy and satisfaction. They have less stress, fewer sick days and less burnout.

As a manager or supervisor, the more your team trusts you—and the more you trust them—the more success you will have together. Trust matters even more for virtual teams.

## Why it matters

Trust is key to building psychological safety.

We all need to feel that the people we work with have confidence in us to do our jobs. Feeling trusted helps us develop a strong sense of belonging at work and we're able to do our jobs effectively. Developing a positive team climate, where members are trusted to provide input, value each other's contributions and care about each other's wellbeing, is the most important thing you can do to create psychological safety for your team.

> 'Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes, and that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking.'

## How it's done

Great managers are credible, act with integrity and look out for the best interests of their teams. They are self-aware and identify when their behaviour and values don't align. Great managers **know how** to build trust with their teams.

Refer to The Trust Equation for more information on the factors that make individuals trustworthy. Addressing these underlying trust factors can improve trustworthiness.

- Know your team
- Enhance performance
- Build trust
- Communicate effectively
- Manage absence
- Provide flexibility
- Provide support
- Support return to work
- Support your team
- Address work demands

## What great managers do

# Give people direction in how they do their work

## 1 Recognise excellence and reward it

- Provide tangible, personal and public recognition to your workers immediately after a goal has been met.
- Recognise achievement of micro goals, as well as the more obvious ones, to regularly celebrate success.
- Remember that public recognition inspires others to try harder too.

## 2 Set motivating goals

- Set challenging, achievable goals that help your workers increase focus and collaborate.
- Make sure that goals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound — include a deadline. State them precisely and positively and review to maintain motivation and direction.

## 3 Let your people decide how they do their work

- Set your workers up for success by providing tools, resources and learning opportunities — and enough time to use them.
- Give clear direction on what needs to be achieved.
- Ask your people 'how do you like to work?' You can learn more about their strengths, while providing space for them to do things their way. Letting people decide how they want to get their work done is a great way to demonstrate trust.
- Remember that greater autonomy drives innovation — because different people try different approaches — and intrinsic motivation.

### Building trust in virtual teams is both more critical and harder to do

When a new team member starts, begin building trust by meeting them in person. This will assist screen bonding.

When using a screen, you can maximise the virtual connection by:

- focussing on the other person with your full attention
- acting in a genuine and natural manner
- not disconnecting from the other person by looking away or being distracted by someone or something.

## 4 Use job crafting

Job crafting occurs when an employee alters aspects of their own tasks to make their work more engaging and meaningful. For example, by choosing projects that more closely align with their skillsets, interests, and passions.

- Involve your employees in their own job design to improve the fit between their work and their individual preferences.
- Help people focus their energies on what they care about most.

# Encourage personal and professional growth

## 5 Be open and communicate often

- Regularly share information and consult your team.
- Ask your team for input before making decisions that affect them.
- Be transparent about decisions, by sharing background information to help people understand them.
- Remember that managers who ask their teams for input and consider their views, increase psychological safety.

## 6 Build genuine relationships

- Show you care about your team members by expressing interest in their lives and concern for their wellbeing.
- Help your team members get to know each other better. Team-building, social activities and team meetings provide opportunities for people to build stronger connections.
- Remember that managers who intentionally build relationships improve performance.

## 7 Encourage personal and professional growth

- Keep in mind that performance at work also depends on your workers' personal growth. People are lifelong learners. They need opportunities to learn and grow holistically, not just acquire new work skills.
- Discuss work-life integration, family and time for recreation and reflection.

## 8 Show vulnerability, while maintaining credibility

- Be honest and open about what you don't know and ask your team for help. Maintain your credibility and role as leader by being positive and constructive and keep the conversation moving forward. For example, 'Great question. I'm not sure what the answer is, but I'll find out and get back to you.'
- Let others see that you don't have all the answers. This will help them get to know you better — which is essential for building trust.
- Remember that people respect leaders who show their vulnerability, admit their mistakes, and reveal that they are human too.

'Ultimately, you <u>cultivate trust</u> by setting a clear direction, giving people what they need to see it through, and getting out of their way.'