



The Trust Factor is Key to High Performing Teams

Leaders, from every time period in history, have tried to figure out how to create the perfect team. In modern times, this quest has led to everything from “scientific management” to Lean Six Sigma and foosball tables at work. **The Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performance Companies** doesn’t argue that these things might help a team, but this book’s focus is on something deeper. **The Trust Factor** looks at the psychology behind high-performance organizations and helps companies aspiring to be high-performance close the gap using the “trust factor”.

What is The Trust Factor About?

Many leaders in trying to avoid the trap of under-performance try a variety of strategies: “Employee of the Month” parking spots, formal awards, stock options, higher pay, promotion, Employee Relations departments, newsletters, and more. These tools have their place, but they are focused on the mistaken assumption that workers are primarily driven to great work by external things (money, status, title, etc.), writes author Paul J. Zak.

The problem with this assumption is that it doesn’t work, according to research.

Although workers need money to buy the things they want or need, money is actually a low-level motivator for doing amazing work. That goes for the “Employee of the Day” recognition, the parking spot, the new title and other such incentives too. The warm and fuzzy feeling that happens when workers get these external things doesn’t last. Something stronger has to be present in the work culture to create a high-performing team.

Zak’s radical approach to high-performance cultures looks at what happens in our brains at different levels of well-being as well as dysfunctional times. He is the first scientist to show that the brain synthesizes the chemical oxytocin when we are trusted and respected. When we feel good about ourselves and our surroundings, we reciprocate trust by being trustworthy. He shows that one’s feelings of joy and satisfaction (oxytocin) are intrinsic drivers in the production of valuable work, which has a multiplier effect on the surrounding community; kindness produces more kindness.

Zak's research goes back to 2001 when he showed that cultures of trust were the most powerful predictors economists had ever found to explain why some countries are prosperous and others are poor. He states that "...high trust stimulates social interaction and integration and acts as an economic lubricant by reducing frictions inherent among people."

The main takeaways are the specific methods we can use to create high-performance cultures. He cleverly uses the term "OXYTOCIN" to create the eight key words that trigger the brain chemical. They are:

Ovation: Show appreciation by celebrating the work well done and project completed. Simple and genuine ovations are motivating and enrich an organizational culture.

eXpectation: Create challenging goals to stretch the creativity and engage the brain.

Yield: Let employees take control of their work. Train them well and give them authority to make decisions.

Transfer: Let employees decide how to transfer their skills. Encourage job rotation and flexible integrative learning.

Openness: Share information to encourage the stakeholder effect.

Caring: Show caring and empathy to create bonds of friendship.

Invest: Invest in developing the human talent of employees.

Natural: Be honest about weaknesses to share the human factors of imperfection.