

# 8

## Trust: A Prerequisite for Sustaining a Team-Based System



### WORDS of WISDOM

*Believe no one who claims to have the right answer . . . it is only a sign of ignorance or self-interest.*



Recently, a company name Allied Signal recognized that to stay competitive, it had to retool its organization from a culture of control and manipulation to one that really motivated workers. It implemented a team-based system because it understood that success would come when employees understood their jobs from the perspective of the whole product, not simply their particular job. As the result of shifting to teams, 99.8% of the products shipped in 1996 were sent on the required date. In the mid-1980s, the number of products shipped on time was only 8.9% (Lilley, 1996).

Today more than ever the antecedents of success for the health care enterprise depend on the cooperation of all staff members, who either work in direct care or support the care delivery at the point of service. Simply stated, doubtful or distrustful staff members do not cooperate in the attainment of organizational goals, no matter how noble. Employee distrust is growing in the face of downsizing, mergers, and rapid change. It is expressed in several subtle and not so subtle behaviors (Box 8-1).

## BOX 8-1

***The Impact of Employee Distrust***

- The degree of involvement or abdication in the improvement of working methods and procedures
- The accuracy of operations reporting, based on truthful estimations of workload
- The rate at which mistakes are detected early and the number of interventions when mistakes do occur
- The achievement of team consensus on the behaviors of professional integrity, sincerity, mutual trust, and unconditional commitment to definitions of the team's work
- The acceptance of accountability for action or nonaction

**TEAM TRUST-BUSTERS**

Teams are very much influenced by the issue of trust. The ability to build commitment, attachment, and mutual trust significantly influences how well teams perform their accountabilities. There are eight team “trust-busters” that will foster the development of dysfunctional and therefore ineffective teams.

**Disbelief in Procedural Justice\***

In this situation, there is a lack of procedural justice, coloring team members' belief in fairness. It comes from unfair work procedures employed by the team and fostered by its leaders. Team members believe that there are inequitable opportunities to provide input and influence. The experience of what is perceived to be biased work procedures diminishes not only

\*Kossgard MA, Schweiger DM, Sappienze, HJ: Building commitment, attachment, and trust in strategic decision making teams: the role of procedural justice, *Academy of Management Journal* 38(1):60-85, 1995.



## TEAM TIP

8.1

### **Antidotes for Procedural Injustice**

- Regularly review the team's process of working together. Make this a normative process for the team by setting aside team meetings periodically to evaluate performance.
- Use the open-ended questionnaire, *Evaluating Your Team's Work Processes*, found at the end of this chapter, to ensure the objective evaluation of assumptions and experiences.
- Use an outside facilitator if you have determined that the team leader or manager share accountability for unfair work processes.

members' commitment to the group's decision, but also their attachment to the group and their trust in leaders. Team Tip 8-1 give antidotes for procedural injustice.

For example, a quality improvement team was chaired by the department's quality improvement director. She had her own agendas, related to her recent poor performance appraisal. She used the team to do her work, therefore improving her performance. When team members complained that they were not following their team charter nor were they allowed to disagree with the "decisions" made by the team, they were told by the leader that regulations required the work to be performed in the way she was directing them to do it. The team was eventually disbanded because it did not meet its original charter and was deemed redundant. The quality director was promoted, and decentralized quality work became a thing of the past.

### **Poor Cooperation of Team Members in Fully Sharing Information**

When each team member shares his or her knowledge and experience, there is added value to the team's decisions. Members have plentiful opportunities to cooperate fully in the sharing of helpful information and experiences. In turn, this cooperation makes it likely that each person can fully support the team's final decision. When trust is absent, there is no commitment to the execution of the team's decisions. People will stall implementation efforts or actually sabotage them. You know you have poor cooperation in fully sharing either personal reactions or expert opinions when:

1. People nod their heads or are silent in response to a statement or question. This false consensus signals fear of sharing an opposite viewpoint and hesitancy to engage in healthy dialogue.
2. People who question information or request more information are labeled as "non-team players" who are obstructing the team from getting its work done.

3. Language games such as the use of jargon, misstating facts, or burying members under complex, unreadable reports are common.

Team Tip 8-2 gives antidotes for inadequate information.

### **Alienation Within the Team Is Allowed to Flourish**

Attachment to the team unfolds as team members get to know one another, feel part of the team, and look forward to working together. When alienation is allowed to flourish, people never come to that special fellowship of a committed team. Instead, team members continue to pursue their individual self-interests at the expense of the team. This limits team flexibility, particularly in evaluating multiple options and differences in opinions.

For example, alienation is unwittingly fostered by allowing the work of the team to be seen as something less important than patient care. In



## **TEAM TIP**

8.2

### ***Antidotes for Inadequate Information***

*It is essential that in the Team Accountability Contract (see Chapter 4) there is documentation that the team accepts and welcomes challenges in the process of reaching consensus.*

*Continually reinforce that decisions need to be data driven. Ask questions such as “Do we have all of the information that we need?” and “Is this decision truly data driven?” Always apply the three C’s to any information collected or presented to the team: is it current, complete, and certain?*

## BOX 8-2

*Example from the Field*

A newly formed management team was having trouble making consensus decisions and was performing at a mediocre level. It seemed that a recent management restructuring had significantly altered the membership of this decision-making group. Members were now from different departments, different reporting structures, and different types of management positions. Because the organization remained traditionally structured, they rarely ran into each other in the course of their daily work. Because they did not know one another very well as people, they were hesitant to trust each other in the conduct of the real dialogue necessary for consensus building.

fact, the work of teams must contribute to the enhancement of patient care. When teamwork is seen as something “extra” by managers, there is inadequate support for team members to be “freed” from patient care to do the work of the team. When several members are absent at every meeting, teams fail to develop, opportunism flourishes, and eventually the team disbands.

Emotional distance between team members also reduces the ability of team members to trust each other and live with differences in their individual perspectives. It also allows some team members to be more productive than others, resulting in an uneven workload and resentment. Box 8-2 gives an example of alienation within the team. Team Tip 8-3 gives antidotes for alienation.

**TEAM TIP**

8.3

***Antidotes for Alienation***

- *Develop a competency-based job description for the team leader role. Team members must have faith in the honesty, goodwill, and sincerity of the team leader, if they are to become attached to the team.*
- *Do the same for the advisor role. If team members do not believe that they can work in an atmosphere of mutual trust, they will avoid participation and the interpersonal connection necessary for success.*
- *Never charter a team unless the team's work is truly tied to the patient care outcomes required by the organization. Hold managers accountable for articulating the value of the team's contributions to patient care.*
- *Challenge personal agendas.*

## Misguided Intent\*

In health care organizations, where the specialization of interest flourishes, misguided intent is epidemic. Harm is caused unintentionally through ignorance, duress, or the rationalization of events. Heartless actions may be taken that are “strictly a business decision” or rationalized as “simply doing our jobs.” Consider the following example. A new surgical nurse caught herself making a medication error. She had begun to add the wrong antibiotic to a patient’s intravenous line, but caught herself before any of the medication was administered. The nurse documented the incident, met with her manager, and received a verbal warning. The manager knew her well, trusted her work, and saw the high level of commitment she had to her patients. She felt a reprimand was in order but also coached the nurse on time management and priority setting.

In this particular organization, incident reports are automated and recorded in the risk management department. On the Monday morning after the incident, this same manager was directed by the vice-president of risk management to suspend the nurse because he, the vice-president of risk management, had come from a hospital that was “soft on patient safety,” and he would “not tolerate that developing in this organization.” His position put the manager in a no-win situation and was totally ignorant of the human side of the incident.

Misguided intent is a trust-buster because it appears as indifference. Ethical issues are never discussed. People relinquish personal accountability for tough, ethical decisions. Eventually a form of cognitive dissonance grows among employees when what is right conflicts that what is actually happening.

In another example from the field, the management structure was flattened and new, combined, and more accountable manager roles were developed by the organization. Unfortunately in the implementation, the

\*Colero L: Common sense ethics in business, *World Business Academy Perspectives* 9(1):67-75, 1995.



### **FOCUS** *Team Leader/Advisor Competencies*

- *Eases team through processes to achieve goals*
- *Recognizes outcomes are based on work of members*
- *Is a positive force in implementation*
- *Facilitates positive team dynamics*
- *Assists team to integrate ideal with reality*
- *Identifies operational implications to team decision making*
- *Consistently shares emerging organization issues with the team*
- *Accepts inevitability of politics and assists teams to respond effectively*
- *Facilitates team learning*
- *Challenges the quality of information*



## TEAM TIP

8.4

### *Antidotes to Misguided Intent*

- Watch for symptoms of organizational groupthink: honest belief that the unethical action is the right thing to do and ignorance of its impact.
- Know when to use a process for the impartial delineation of the facts, such as a cost-benefit analysis or risk analysis.
- Avoid knee-jerk decisions that offer quick solutions but sidetrack into faulty decisions. Allow time for reflection about what the right thing is to do in this instance.
- Be a model for candor and integrity.
- Ask yourself, "How would I feel if this action was described in the next issue of *Hospitals and Health Networks*?"
- Support those who honestly challenge intent.

tough decisions of competence were not addressed. Seniority-strong but incompetent managers were put into the new roles. People became increasingly uncomfortable with this disharmony and found the consequences too hard to think about, much less discuss. Peer pressure grew, encouraging people to remain blind, not saying aloud what they actually were seeing. It became more and more difficult for people to trust anyone about any kind of change being proposed in this organization. Team Tip 8-4 features antidotes to misguided intent.

### **Managing People with Paternalism/Maternalism\***

The nurturing, caring nature of health care service is sometimes its own worst enemy, because these features so essential to good patient outcomes can be a disaster when they become the predominant management style. When people are managed like children, they make choices out of guilt or acquiescence. The consequences of acting or not acting are defined by

\*Hanson R: An analysis of the concept of mutuality, *Image: The Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 29(1):39-45, 1997.



## TEAM TIP

8.5

### *Antidotes to Parental Management Styles*

- Replace paternalism/maternalism with mutuality.
- Insist on the team outcomes of mutuality.
- Watch for and recognize gestures, looks, language, and actions that foster mutuality. Use these examples to teach others the signs of mutual relationships.
- Understand how your own "parent messages," developed in your own family, play out in your management style . . . both the nurturing and the critical messages.

powerful others. So, why not park your brains at the door when you come to work? A mind is indeed a terrible thing to waste. Patients, families, co-workers, and the organization are the losers in this instance. People managed in this way are robbed of the opportunity to trust their own judgments and to become more self-managing. Team Tip 8-5 features antidotes to parental management styles.

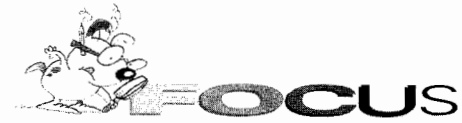
### Language Games\*

Language shapes organizational events. Articulate leaders can compress the scope of employee thinking so that people cannot think dissident thoughts. Formal definitions can be used to define words into their opposites. For example, too much freedom in shared leadership groups is seen as a negative because it is defined as a form of slavery to the group.

Doublespeak is another language game. The communicator deliberately clouds the message in a pretense of communicating. Some people are masters at making the bad appear good or applying euphemisms to avoid harsh realities.

Jargon, or the specialized language applied by a professional group as a form of shorthand, can be used to obfuscate rather than to illuminate. Have you ever sat down with a computer programmer to get to the bottom of a problem with a report that you needed, and found yourself completely baffled by the discussion? Have you found, with the merging of patient care units or functional departments, that enormous communication problems are the source of seemingly endless issues with the change? Chances are, jargon is getting in the way.

When manipulative definitions, doublespeak, or jargon is used in communicating with teams, credibility and trust in the message is not possible. People sit and listen, wondering what the communicator is really trying to say. Because teams are heavily reliant on the character of



### Outcomes of Mutuality

- *Increased sense of situational control*
- *Increased ability to engage in self-management*
- *Satisfaction with relationship*
- *Optimized creativity*

\*Mohr WK: The outcomes of corporate greed, *Image: The Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 29(1):39-45, 1997.





## TEAM TIP

8.6

### *Antidotes to Language Games*

- *Develop ground rules that protect people who report language games.*
- *Ensure that everyone is held to a social contract with each other, to communicate in a clear, comprehensive, well-intentioned manner.*
- *Model the positive confrontation of people using language games. Staff members spend a fair amount of time watching manager behavior. This is the quickest way to develop an organizational norm.*
- *Never assume that the other party understands you. Check in with your listeners, asking questions such as “Am I making any sense here?” This type of question invites people to admit their confusion.*
- *Keep good minutes. Never allow poorly worded or inaccurate descriptions to go uncorrected. This only perpetuates miscommunication. Really read minutes before approving them, rather than the all too typical once-over glance and quick approval.*
- *Always try to be sensitive to the other party’s point of view. If you can address the unique perspective of other parties in your communication, you create the foundation for more dialogue.*

the information they receive, the quality of their decisions will be affected by language games, particularly in the case of purposeful confusion or manipulation. Team Tip 8-6 features antidotes to language games. Unfortunately, language games are one of the most popular strategies used by those who want to see teams fail. The sad news is that they almost always work.

## Putting People in No-Win Situations

When team members or their leaders are put in no-win situations, they withdraw from the situation and fail to take action on otherwise actionable issues. For example, people in one organization were asked to look the other way when a carefully negotiated problem-solving process in the new team-based system was ignored, so that the old bureaucracy could prevail. No-win situations are also created when powerful others publicly misstate the facts of a situation. This can happen when a leader fails to understand just what the work of the team was and how the situation came into existence. In this case, teams feel devalued and distrustful of executive support.

Shifting blame to another person or department and telling people to cover mistakes are also very potent ways to put people in no-win situations. A common example is the nursing director who tells her staff members that “absolutely nothing is to leave this department.” This makes it almost impossible for the staff members from this department to participate in multidisciplinary teams with any semblance of honesty. Team Tip 8-7 gives antidotes to no-win situations.

## Employ Systems of Blame Instead of Systems of Accountability\*

Although significant lip service is given to accountability, the truth is that it is woefully absent in many organizations. When there are no accountability systems, there has to be a mechanism for problem solving. The process that replaces accountability is blame. Something goes wrong, there is a search for the responsible party, the culprits are named and punished, so the problem goes away. The burden is shifted and a short-term fix is once again in place. Blame is also an excellent strategy for



### TEAM TIP

8.7

#### *Antidotes to No-Win Situations*

- *Always listen to the other side. You may not realize how your approach affects the other person's actions.*
- *Ask for and encourage feedback. Avoid defensive responses.*
- *Be careful not to fall into that old “blame game”: If it were not for you, I (we) would have . . . Take accountability only for that which you have contributed to a circumstance, and encourage others to do the same.*

\*Paul MC: Moving from blame to accountability: *The Systems Thinker* 8(1):1-6, 1997.