TRUST AND NEUROSCIENCE

Trust Starts with Being Seen.

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Have you noticed how trust feels harder to come by these days?

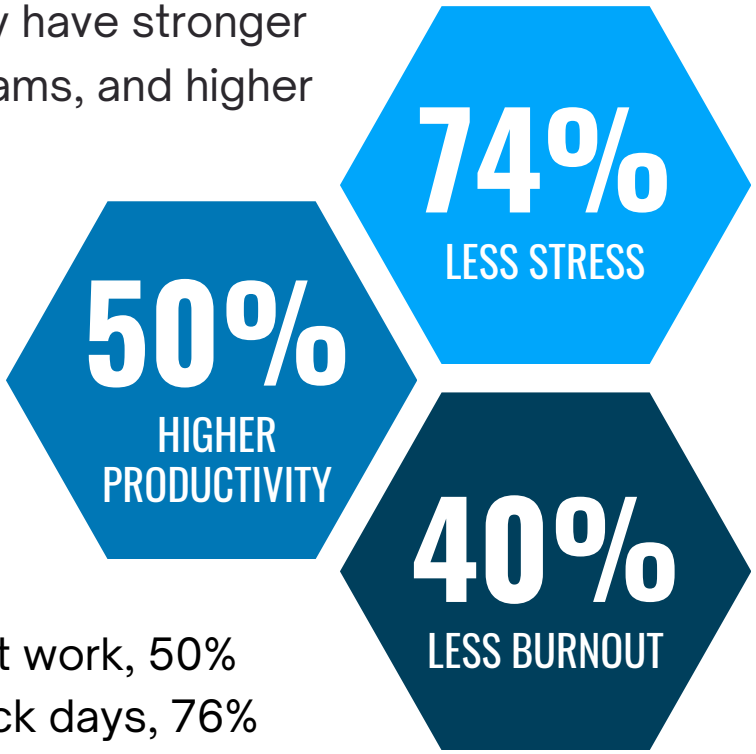
You may be unsure about information online, or you've grown skeptical of statements from public figures.

Lately, I've found myself often wondering what has become of trust—in our workplaces, communities, and how this is impacting our day-to-day interactions.

In an era where misinformation is rampant and the definition of good behavior seems to be shifting before our eyes, how do we know who to trust?

More importantly, how can **we** continue to be or become genuinely trustworthy?

High-trust organizations are more than just good places to work; they consistently have stronger business outcomes, healthier teams, and higher job satisfaction.



According to research published in the HBR*, organizations with high levels of trust experience astounding benefits compared to low trust organizations. 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout.

Investing in Trust is good business!

Clearly, trust isn't just good ethics—it's key to business success and critical to enjoying happiness in our jobs.

*Research by Dr. Paul J. Zak

In my journey to understand trust deeply, I've been inspired by the work of neuroscientist Dr. Paul J. Zak, who identifies eight conditions leaders can foster to build organizational trust:

1. Recognize Excellence
2. Provide Stretch Goals
3. Macro Manage
4. Support Passion Work
5. Over-communicate
6. Inter-connect
7. Support Holistic Growth
8. Share Fearlessly

1. RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

Think about the last time someone genuinely noticed and meaningfully acknowledged your hard work. How did that feel?

Recognition matters because it validates that our life energy and our contributions matter. Being seen and appreciated, creates a sense of belonging and safety.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME SOMEONE ACKNOWLEDGED YOUR HARD WORK?

Dr. Zak emphasizes that the most impactful recognition—the kind that genuinely builds trust—comes from peers, not just leaders.

Peer recognition is especially powerful when it's:

1. **Tangible:** Something real and meaningful.
2. **Unexpected**: Surprising and spontaneous.
3. **Personal**: Tailored specifically for the recipient.
4. **Public**: Visible.

Actionable Ideas

Recognition isn't one-size-fits-all. As we all know, some people love a public shout-out, while others would genuinely prefer a root canal to public praise. What if there was a way to respect these individual differences?

THE RECOGNITION BUCKET LIST

Imagine if each employee, during onboarding, indicated exactly how they'd like to be recognized—whether privately, publicly, with a handwritten note, a small gift, or something else. Teams could easily share these preferences, enabling thoughtful, peer-driven appreciation that genuinely resonates.

ROSE, BUD AND THORN

Making recognition a habit, versus a rare event requires some planning. My family has a daily ritual to create connection, we share something good (rose), challenging (thorn), and something we're looking forward to (bud). When we pass the metaphorical baton we share something we value about the next person.

Could your team adopt something similar in your meetings that to transform recognition into a habitual practice rather than an occasional event?

HOW DOES YOUR TEAM CURRENTLY RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE?

HAVE YOU SEEN UNIQUE RITUALS OR PRACTICES THAT WORK PARTICULARLY WELL?