

Trust, Relationships and Transformation

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The ability to build trust-based relationships is probably one of the greatest business assets an organization can have; some of the documented positive outcomes of securing the trust of customer and business partners include better financial performance, higher repeat sales, improved flexibility and higher levels of staff and customer satisfaction.

For many organizations, developing or improving the ability to build trust-based relationships will require a transformational approach, with cultural change at the centre. It is crucial to ensure, first of all, that the organization's core values are promoting the right types of norms and behaviours to promote and not hinder the development of trust-based relationships.

Initially, the cultural changes necessary to improve an organization's ability to develop trust-based relationships must be clearly identified and communicated to employees. But employees must also be actively involved in discussing the required changes and translating them to their own jobs and areas of work, since in this process new thought patterns are established that will lead to sustainable changes in organizational norms and behaviours.

Effective cultural change also involves the organizational systems that promote and reinforce culture by rewarding acceptable and desired behaviours and penalizing others, or by ensuring that employees have the right skills and expertise to meet the needs of the transformed organization. In particular, seven "change shaping levers" must be reviewed and modified as necessary: the leadership system; the organizational structure; the staffing and deployment system; the performance management system; organizational competencies; the compensation and rewards system and the communications system.

Schroeder & Schroeder Inc.'s Art and Science of Transformation[®] framework was developed in recognition that effective transformation requires the right balance of "art" and "science", with science defined as the tools, techniques and methods of organizational change, and art defined as the softer skills and personal attributes needed to influence the attitudes and behaviours of people. Like any other organizational transformation, making the changes necessary for building trust-based business relationships requires application of the right balance of art and science, with a range of art and science skills involved in both employee-level and organizational-level transformation.

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